

PRESBYTERIANS, CATHOLICS, AND GRASSROOTS POLITICS:
LOCAL CHURCHES IN MALAWI'S POST-AUTHORITARIAN ERA

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1999

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While the many hours I have spent alone with my computer necessarily made the writing of this dissertation a very solitary experience, a moment's reflection reminds me of the larger collection of people who helped to make the project possible. Before all else, I would like these people to be recognized.

I wish to thank first and foremost my dissertation committee at the University of Florida. Dr. Goran Hyden, my chair, has throughout my graduate education pushed the limits of my intellectual perspectives and provided a model of kindness and sufferance which I hope to carry with me through my career. As for this study, I am greatly indebted for his encouragement in its early stages as well as for guidance and attentive feedback through its completion. Dr. Kenneth Wald has also been a major source of intellectual input, putting in considerable time and effort to refine my arguments and place the study in a broader comparative perspective. Moreover, his empathy and understanding of "dissertation angst" were vital to me during the early stages of writing when it looked "too darn big." I also owe a great deal of thanks to Dr. Philip Williams, who introduced me to the study of churches and politics. Far beyond this, he has patiently and thoroughly read drafts of this project, offering discerning and challenging comments which have helped me to create a more polished product. Dr. Michael Martinez has provided valuable assistance on numerous methodological questions and

offered useful comments which allowed me to improve my work on the clergy in particular. I would also like to thank him for his "open door," from which I have benefitted all too frequently. Finally, Dr. Manuel Vasquez, from the Department of Religion, played an important role in the formulation of the project, in early stages asking me to specify research questions more clearly and to expand my data collection techniques to include more observational and qualitative methods. Beyond this, in bringing me to read Pierre Bourdieu, he has made an indelible impact on my thinking about broader social questions.

The major portion of the research, conducted in 1995 and 1996, was funded by generous grants from the Overseas Ministries Study Center (supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts) and the National Science Foundation. I also received support from the African Studies Center of the University of Florida, both for a pre-dissertation visit in 1993 and for language training two years later. Initial write-up was supported by a McLaughlin Dissertation Fellowship provided by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences of the University of Florida. I am greatly indebted to all of these institutions.

In Malawi, I owe my primary debt of gratitude to the circle of friends and family who sustained my happiness and comforted my frustrations during the research process. I was blessed, in particular, to fall into hands of James and Josie Tengtenga, who, along with their children, provided a home in the truest sense of the word. I remain closely connected to their lives, as they do to mine. I would also like to thank Diane Cusick for her friendship and laughter, both of which were crucial to my own sanity. Finally, my friend Jim Cairns graciously housed me on my many visits to Lilongwe and became my

primary bantering partner--the value of both roles cannot be overstated.

I would also like to thank the members of the academic community in Malawi. The Centre for Social Research of the University of Malawi provided institutional support without which the research would have been impossible. I was also closely connected to the Department of Religious Studies at Chancellor College. I owe particular gratitude to the head of that department, Dr. Joseph C. Chakanza, not only for encouraging my research, but also for affiliating me with the department. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Kenneth Ross, who helped to spark my interest in my topic and provided an important source of guidance and feedback in the field.

Support from both of the churches in this study was also instrumental to the success of this project. In the CCAP- Blantyre Synod, I wish to single out the Reverend Saul Chitsulo and the Reverend Misanjo Kansilanga, both of whom took interest in the research and provided access to documents and interviews essential to the research. In the Catholic Church, my thanks go to Bishop Tarcizius Ziyaye of Lilongwe Diocese, Bishop Alan Chamgwera of Zomba Diocese, and Bishop James Chiona of Blantyre Archdiocese for supporting my efforts to interview local clergy. I would also like to thank Peter Mulomole, who provided access to the Catholic Secretariat Archives.

My research assistants also played an incredibly important part in the research process. While many worked for me, I would like specifically to mention Davidson Chimwaza and Johnston Makoka, who accompanied me during my local-level fieldwork. They provided not only research support, but also intellectual input and, most importantly, friendship.

Finally, I owe a huge debt of thanks to those who participated in the project as the foci of study. This includes clergy who provided not only their time to answer my questions, but also welcomed me into their homes. It also includes the hundreds of Malawians who answered my questions, shared their thoughts, and allowed me to witness a small part of their lives.

In Gainesville, my own intellectual development, progress on the dissertation, and personal health have benefitted from the support of an important group of friends and colleagues. In the first place, let me thank all those who during the write-up offered empathy, encouragement, or a reminder that, "it doesn't have to be perfect." Beyond this, I would like to thank Holly Hanson, Michael Murphy, Kathryn Burns, Dennis Galvan, David Hill, and Richard Marcus for the contributions they have made to my intellectual and personal growth.

My family has also provided important support throughout this process. Very quickly they realized not to ask when the project would be finished. More importantly, they have endured my frustrations and help me keep them in perspective.

During the writing of this dissertation, I was engaged to and married my wife, Christina. Throughout this difficult process, she has been my refuge and source of tranquility; accepting my desire to "get it done," while helping me realize that there are more important things in life.

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

PRESBYTERIANS, CATHOLICS, AND GRASSROOTS POLITICS:
LOCAL CHURCHES IN MALAWI'S POST-AUTHORITARIAN ERA

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August 1999

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Major Department: Political Science

This dissertation explores the contribution of local-level churches to grassroots political life in the newly liberalizing African country of Malawi. Centered on case studies of the Catholic Church and the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), the research aims to enhance understandings of civil society in post-authoritarian Africa. The study assesses whether grassroots Presbyterian and Catholic churches contribute to the quality of democracy at local levels and evaluates the factors that inform their emerging political roles in this respect.

The research explores the churches from two different angles. First, it examines the activities of the clergy, assessing the factors which motivate or constrain grassroots clerical activism. The project explains the clergy's behavior with reference to the religious ideas that guide them, the institutions of which they are a part, and the social influences on their thoughts and actions. An important theme of this research is that the

social environments in which the clergy are embedded provide an infertile context for activism. This limits their propensity to address political concerns in their communities.

The second angle explores the influence of local religious organizations on processes of grassroots political empowerment. Micro-level research evaluated the capacity of the local churches to socialize higher levels of civic competence and political efficacy among average citizens. One of the key findings concerns the differential impact of these churches on women. Catholic women are more likely than their Presbyterian counterparts to participate and speak out in grassroots political affairs. Part of this results from the civic skills they obtain through church participation. But it is also related to the fact that the Catholic Church more effectively insulates in-church experiences from disempowering patriarchal tendencies in Malawian society.

The findings from the research are somewhat ironic given the thrust of much of the literature on civil society. The study indicates that the church actors and organizations which serve the democratizing functions of civil society are those which are least representative of society as a whole. This suggests that civil society organizations that are insulated from larger social influences may actually be better placed to promote accountable and civic politics at the grassroots. This in turn raises questions about the possibilities for the emergence and operation of viable civil society organizations, both in Malawi and similar contexts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	vi
 CHAPTERS	
1 INTRODUCTION: CHURCHES, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY AT THE GRASSROOTS	1
Civil Society and Its Discontents	5
Looking Local	9
Approaching the Empirical Question--Churches as Actors and Socializing Institutions	12
Approaching the Theoretical Question(s)	16
A Note on Methodology	20
The Outline of the Study	21
 2 MALAWI: STATE, SOCIETY, AND POST-AUTHORITARIAN POLITICS	 22
The Socio-Economic Reality	23
Banda: State, Society, and the Grassroots	28
The Change	34
The New Malawi: State, Society, and the Grassroots	37
Civil Society to the Rescue?	46
 3 THE LOCAL CLERGY AS POLITICAL ACTORS: INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS	 49
Research Process	51
The Argument	54
Outline	57

4	THE CCAP-BLANTYRE SYNOD AND CATHOLIC CHURCH AS POLITICAL ACTORS: REVIEWING THE INSTITUTIONAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT	59
	Overview and Dynamics at Independence	61
	The Banda Era	66
	Churches as Agents of Change	71
	The Blantyre Synod and Catholic Church in the Multi-party Era	80
	By Way of Conclusion: Returning to the Local Clergy	92
5	THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CLERGY TO LOCAL POLITICS: AN ASSESSMENT AND OVERVIEW	94
	Reviewing the Clergy's Political Activities	95
	Three Areas of Activity: The Relative Proportions of Active Clergy	106
	Local-level Activism: Variances Among the Clergy	109
	Limits to Local Clergy Activism	111
	Conclusion	114
6	EXPLAINING CLERGY POLITICAL BEHAVIOR: HOLY AND HUMAN INFLUENCES	116
	What Shapes Clergy Political Behavior: Theoretical Frameworks and Perspectives	118
	Assessing the Variances in Clergy Activism	125
	Social Influences and the Limits to Clergy Activism	146
	Conclusion	162
7	THE SOCIALIZING EFFECT OF THE CCAP AND CATHOLIC CHURCH: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES	165
	Theoretical Frameworks and Perspectives	166
	Implications	180
	Study Design	185
8	RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE IN MZIMBA	190
	Socio-political Life in Mzimba	190
	Religious Life in Mzimba	197
	Conclusion	220
9	CHURCHES AND ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE AT THE GRASSROOTS	221
	The Vendors' Association	222
	Tobacco Clubs	224
	Discussion	254

10 CHURCHES AND EMERGING POLITICAL EFFICACY AMONG LOCAL CITIZENS	259
Research Process	262
Churches and Emerging Political Efficacy Among Men	264
Churches and Political Efficacy Among Women in Mzimba	297
11 WHY SOME WOMEN SPEAK AND WHY MORE DO NOT	323
Specifying the Impact On Women: The In-church Experiences	324
Understanding the Impact on Women: Institutional, Religious, and Social Factors	342
Specifying and Understanding the Non-impacts	354
Conclusion	360
12 CONCLUSION	362
The Emerging Status of Local Churches in Malawi's Civil Society	362
Understanding the Political Role of Local-level Churches	369
The Trouble with Civil Society	372
APPENDIX A: INDICES FOR SPECIFIC SUB-GROUPS: CLUB LEADERSHIP AS AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	378
APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN MZIMBA	382
APPENDIX C: SELECTED ASSOCIATIONAL MEASURES FOR MEN: POLITICAL EFFICACY INDICATORS	390
APPENDIX D: SELECTED ASSOCIATIONAL MEASURES FOR WOMEN: POLITICAL EFFICACY INDICATORS	391
APPENDIX E: SELECTED ASSOCIATIONAL MEASURES FOR CATHOLIC WOMEN: POLITICAL EFFICACY INDICATORS	393
APPENDIX F: SELECTED ASSOCIATIONAL MEASURES FOR PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN: POLITICAL EFFICACY INDICATORS	395
REFERENCES	397
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	412

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: CHURCHES, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND
THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY AT THE GRASSROOTS

Introduction

On June 16, 1993, citizens in the east African country of Malawi celebrated a turning point in their national political history. On this day, the country's sole radio station announced the results of a referendum which asked citizens to choose between single-party and multi-party political systems. Reflecting changes occurring elsewhere in Africa, Malawians voted decisively to end three decades of authoritarian rule and join the continent's era of democratic experimentation.

Speaking at a public rally shortly after the results were announced, then-democratic activist Bakili Muluzi offered specific gratitude to two of the key protagonists in the struggle for political change in the country. "In particular," stated Muluzi, "I would like to single out the seven Catholic Bishops and the [Presbyterian] Blantyre Synod."¹ The praise for the two churches was more than appropriate. Only fifteen months earlier, the Catholic Bishops had helped to initiate Malawi's transformation by boldly issuing a pastoral letter challenging the authoritarian practices of the regime of "President for Life" Kamuzu Banda. Such an act was previously unthinkable in Banda's Malawi. Months later, the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) undertook

¹ Found in Ross (1995a). Muluzi would later become the President of Malawi.

much of the impetus to organize civic and ecclesiastical leaders in opposition to Banda. Both churches also worked in tandem to press the government on political reform and disseminate pro-democracy messages in the period leading up to the referendum.

The activities of the Catholic Church and Blantyre Synod were critical to the national political changes which occurred in Malawi. Many, indeed, both in popular narratives and scholarly writings in Malawi, have celebrated churches as the true agents of democratization. Moreover, since Malawi's transition to a multi-party state, church leaders have continued to occupy a highly visible space in national political life. At times, this has even involved challenging political elites whose behavior has threatened to destabilize Malawi's embryonic democracy.

Yet despite their highly prominent role in national level affairs, critical questions nonetheless remain about the churches' larger and longer term contribution to Malawi's political life. Specifically, this concerns their activities and influence in society more generally. As is well-documented, churches--consciously or not-- play an important role in politics at the deeper levels of society. With representatives and structures reaching down to the grassroots, churches have considerable potential to shape both the quality of democracy for the average citizen, as well as the all-important social and cultural bases for democratic consolidation. Thus, their local-level political role in Malawi's post-authoritarian context merits serious consideration.

The empirical focus of this dissertation concerns precisely this issue. The research assesses and analyzes the role of Malawi's local-level Catholic and Presbyterian churches in grassroots political life. Although these churches have been central players at

the national level, do they contribute to the substance of democracy at the local level?

And, of greater importance, why or why not?

In addressing this issue, the project goes to the heart of a much larger theoretical concern among observers and students of African politics: the status and emerging political role of the actors and organizations who represent civil society. As is well known, both scholars and policy makers have emphasized that these actors and organizations must play an important part to help ensure the consolidation and deepening of Africa's democratic changes. Promoting a democratic political culture, fostering citizen participation, insuring state accountability to citizen needs--these are but a few of the critical "functions" which civil society organizations are supposed to perform in the new democracies. Despite these hopes, however, very little is understood about the organizations which actually make up civil society. On one hand, this is manifest in the limited scholarly attention which has been devoted to their impact and activities in local--as opposed to national--political arenas. On the other, there is very little understanding about the factors that shape the character of these organizations. Accepting that the actors of civil society do have a potentially important contribution to make to Africa's unfolding political trajectory, there is marked demand for sustained inquiry into their emerging political role.

This study intends to fill part of this gap in our understanding of civil society in Africa. In focusing on Malawi's local churches, I explore the political role of one of the more pervasive and significant institutions within civil society; and do so at a level which is highly important politically, but often neglected by analysts. Answering empirical and theoretical questions about local churches will increase our knowledge of these specific

civil society organizations. Moreover, doing so will more generally help to explore the issue of civil society and its possibilities in Africa's emerging democracies

Using the cases of the Blantyre Synod of the CCAP and the Catholic Church in Malawi, the specific research tasks to which the dissertation assigns itself are twofold. In the first place, I seek to explore whether local-level churches--defined as both the clerical representatives on the ground and the grassroots extensions of larger ecclesiastical institutions--play a role in enriching or improving the quality of democracy for the average citizen at the grassroots. Are churches active in efforts to extend tangible gains of political reform to the grassroots? Do they abet processes which help local-level citizens play a more active and efficacious role for themselves in political life? These are the basic empirical questions which I ask of the churches in this study.

In the second place, and more importantly, the dissertation has a theoretical task. Specifically, I seek to examine the factors which shape how local-level churches relate to grassroots politics. For example, why do some clergy (as opposed to others) work to facilitate state responsiveness to local needs? Why are some churches "better" or "worse" at empowering citizens than others? In this respect, the case studies of these churches serve the purposes of building theoretical knowledge about the political role of local churches more generally.

In dealing with these theoretical questions, the project draws attention to three important factors which shape the emerging role of these churches at the local level. In particular, I argue that the local church must be understood in the context of the larger institution of which it is a part, the religious values and experiences of clergy and faithful, and the larger social influences on both local clergy and grassroots church organizations.

Through this broad analytical framework, the project highlights the relatively contingent nature of churches' contributions to grassroots politics. Moreover, by pointing out the connections between these organizations and their larger environment, the study provides an optic into the social conditions which inform the functioning of civil society. As I will argue, consideration of these conditions is critical for those concerned with Africa's unfolding political trajectories.

Civil Society and Its Discontents

There is little denying the central place which the concept of civil society has obtained among Africanists in recent years. The concept's present currency owes its origins to efforts in the late 1980s and early 1990s to delineate the important political role which social organizations and processes play in African countries (see Bayart 1986; Chabal 1986, Rothchild and Chazan 1988; Crook 1991; and especially Bratton 1989). In many respects, this emphasis was a reaction to much of the "statist" literature which tended to focus primarily on state-level variables when explaining political phenomena. Social actors, it was argued, are important participants in shaping the various political outcomes witnessed on the continent. Nowhere was this more clearly demonstrated than in the activities of many social organizations in the processes of political reform which swept Africa in the last 5-7 years (see Diamond 1993; Bratton 1994a; and VonDoepp 1996).

Since the onset of Africa's changes, the prominence of "civil society" within discussions of African politics has increased markedly. Moreover, the tenor of the discussion has changed somewhat. Early treatments of civil society tended to use the concept in more of a heuristic sense--simply orienting the student of African politics to

the realm of organized social life beyond the state. Occasionally, civil society was also treated as an essential “good”—that is, contributing to positive developments on the African political scene. In more recent discussions however, many authors build on the heuristic perspective to assign a functionalist role to the actors and organizations of civil society. Civil society, it is argued, must play an essentially supportive role in the ongoing democratization of African polities. Larry Diamond (1994), for instance, suggests ten functions which the actors and organizations of civil society can perform in order to extend and support the democratization processes in their countries. These include checking the power of the state, helping to aggregate and communicate societal interests, and nurturing participatory and democratic cultures in society at large. Similar perspectives are offered by scholars such as Chazan (1992) and Schmitter and Karl (1991), and also policy-oriented writers such as Harbeson (1993, 1994), Landel-Mills (1992), and Hadenius and Uggle (1996).²

From the new perspective then, “civil society” has a job to do: Its empirical referents on the ground are *supposed* to undertake activities and enhance social processes which allow for the consolidation and deepening of the gains of democracy. It is in the spirit of this theoretical premise that many donors are now engaged in efforts to support civil society organizations (“CSOs” in the developmentalist lexicon) as part of their programs to further “democracy and governance” in African countries.

Such a functionalist interpretation of civil society is not without problems or criticisms, however. The premise that civil society organizations serve or can serve

² To be sure, authors also emphasize other important factors which can contribute to democratization processes overall. This includes designing effective political institutions as well as creating viable economies in liberalizing states.

essentially positive or “democratizing” functions in the polity is questioned from a number of different angles. Callaghy (1994) for instance refuses to even use the term civil society. In his view, the social organizations and actors of the non-state realm are less marked for their “civil” or democratizing proclivities than for the potentially disruptive role they can play in political life. In particular this pertains to their potential to undermine the current agenda for economic reform on the continent. Other discussions suggest that the organizations and actors of civil society reflect distinct class and particularistic contradictions within African societies. Coming from a more critical tradition, Jean-Francois Bayart (1993) highlights that civil society organizations are embedded in the same processes of class formation and power relations which have helped to undermine civic politics in Africa since the eve of independence. Similar themes resonate in the work of Robert Fatton (1995), who writes, “by generally reflecting the lopsided balance of class, ethnic, and sexual power, the organizations of civil society tend inevitably to privilege the privileged and marginalize the marginalized” (72) (see also Fatton 1992). The implication is that civil society cannot play a truly transformative role in the polity. The changes which ensue from its activation in political life will represent mere adjustments in state-level politics rather than fundamental gains in the struggle between powerful and powerless.

To be sure, these views stand in contrast to those of academic liberals (such as Diamond and Harbeson) and donors who see the functionalist potential of civil society organizations arrayed against the state to create a more civic and accountable politics. One problem, however, is that these critiques of civil society are either totalizing in their perspectives or, much like the functionalist approaches, characterized by deductive

reasoning rather than empirical investigation of the actual representatives of civil society on the ground. Building on this shortcoming within the literature, certain scholars have made important contributions by offering empirical explorations of the role of civil society organizations in African democracies. The work of Michael Bratton (1994b) on farmer organizations in Zimbabwe, Ronald Kassimir (1998) on the Catholic Church in Uganda, and E. Gyimah Boadi (1996) on civic organizations more generally are exemplary in this respect. Though their conclusions are somewhat pessimistic about the potential for a democratizing civil society, their insights are grounded on empirical evidence about the actual dynamics and processes which shape the political role and impact of these organizations.

In conducting empirical research on the role of a key organization within civil society, this study falls within the latter genre of work. Given its salience in the literature there is a crying need for sustained inquiry into the actual representatives of civil society. To be sure, however, the project is also informed by both the functionalist views and their criticisms. On one level, I accept the premise of the functionalist school that the institutions and actors of civil society *can in theory* play an important and positive role in the African polities. This is as true at the local level as it is at the national level. As such, many of the questions I ask of churches at the local level are informed by distinct ideas about what civil society organizations are supposed to do. I ask whether they promote state accountability and responsiveness to local needs. I ask whether they encourage the development of political efficacy and participatory cultures. In keeping with some of the critical views, however, I make no allusions about whether such a positive role is realized or even *empirically possible*. Moreover, I accept that the organizations of civil society do

not exist in a vacuum merely waiting to be propelled into positive political action by donor funds and instructions. Their role is shaped by distinct dynamics and processes which need to be explained.

In short then, this study is very much inspired by the concept of civil society, but also informed by frustrations with it. I seek not only to document the local-level political role of a critical institution within civil society, but also to shed theoretical light on the whys of their relationship to grassroots politics.

Looking Local

As is clear, this study targets the local-level relationship between churches and politics as a primary focus for inquiry. This attention to the grassroots deserves brief explanation.

At the most general level, my attention to the quality of democracy at the grassroots can be understood as a response to recent scholarship on “political change” in Africa. One of the trends within Africanist literature is a noticeable tendency to focus disproportionately on the macro-political arena as the locus of relevant activity. The recent attention to “political renewal” and “democratization”--with its attendant emphases on elections, political parties, and changes in macro-institutions--serves as testimony (Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Ottaway 1998; and Joseph 1999). While studying such dimensions of the on-going process of change in Africa is important, this represents but one arena of political life.

The attention to the local level can serve as a useful complement--and possibly even a corrective--to excessive attention to the high political arena. In one respect, looking in localized arenas may help to temper some of the evaluative statements which

surround Africa's current situation. What looks like positive renewal or democracy from the purview of the statehouse, donor office, or hotel may look very different from the village prayer house or urban beer hall. This was abundantly clear in Malawi. Although local citizens still celebrated the removal of the predatory and repressive system of Kamuzu Banda, they were also quick to emphasize that the promises of democracy had not been realized. All too frequently one heard specific complaints about the neglect of grassroots concerns as elites took care of themselves. Equally apparent was the perception that the struggles in the theater of high politics had little to do with the immediate concerns the local citizens. In this sense, the situation in Malawi bespoke what the late Nigerian political scientist Claude Ake (1995) has called "the democratization of disempowerment." In his view, "democratic participation does little for rural people in Africa, because domination is constituted in such way that they cannot take advantage of such access" (71).

The importance of looking local is that it requires us to confront some of these potential contradictions and problems which lurk beneath the surface of Africa's new multi-party systems. We are forced to ask questions about the substance of democracy for the average citizen. This in and of itself is an important issue to investigate in the study of politics in any setting. The national arena may tell us very little about how the vast majority of citizens experience political life, let alone how they shape it.

Related to this, the local arena also presents the student of African politics with a range of variables which will shape the trajectory of politics at the national level. Factors such as political culture or levels of regime support can truly only be witnessed and tapped at the micro-level. Accepting that these are important variables--and much of the

literature purports that they are--implies that one must look local to understand the deeper forces shaping the prospects for democracy or governance over the long haul.

Looking local then helps to shift the general focus of political inquiry to a highly relevant, and occasionally neglected, arena of investigation. Equally important, my attention to grassroots contexts pertains to the more specific issue of how one can best study the organizations of civil society, most especially churches. As the literature emphasizes, the institutions of civil society obtain importance not only for their role in state level politics, but also for their potential impact on deeper political processes at the level of society and culture. Indeed, it is for this reason that they can play such an important role in shaping and consolidating processes of political change in Africa.

Moreover, for no other institution in civil society is the potential to influence deep politics greater than for churches. Unfortunately, much of the recent literature on churches in Africa fails to explore this local-level dimension of their role. The bulk of scholarship has tended to focus disproportionately on the activities of ecclesiastical elites in national political affairs.³ This includes research on matters such as church efforts in processes of regime transition (Gifford 1995; Boyle 1992), their contributions to national political discourse (Sabar-Friedman 1995), and their failings in the consolidation of democracy (Van Hoywhegan 1996). To be sure, these are important aspects of the emerging relationship between churches and politics. But, again, the churches' role in political life extends much further.

³ An important exception to this trend is the work of Ron Kassimir (1995), which explores the salience of Catholic religious identities at the grassroots in Uganda.

While churches are prominent and highly visible institutions at the national level, even more so they are extensive organizations which have regular interactions with both government and society at the grassroots. As such, their impact on politics is realized as much within local arenas, as at the national level. One need not look far for research which corroborates this view. Churches can influence various aspects of grassroots political life such as the quality of local-level state-society relations (Stewart-Gambino 1992a), the nature and degree of political participation in their communities (Levine 1992; Harris 1996) and character of political culture among the faithful (Wald et al. 1988; Ireland 1991). For this reason, a full understanding of churches' influence on politics can only result from attention to their activities and effects at the local level. Only then will we have a greater perspective on their impact as part of civil society.

Approaching the Empirical Question--Churches as Actors and Socializing Institutions

To restate, the research in this dissertation is concerned with the contribution of local-level churches to the quality of democracy at the grassroots of Malawi. As conceived in this study, churches can make positive contributions to local democracy in two distinct ways. In the first place, they can help to enhance the political awareness, efficacy, and organizational capacities of local citizens. To the extent that they empower grassroots actors to take a greater role for themselves in the political process and improve civic life in their communities, churches help to deepen the socio-cultural foundations of democratic processes. In the second place, local churches can contribute to the quality of democracy by helping to increase or facilitate state responsiveness to citizen and community needs. In this sense, church efforts to enhance basic levels of political

accountability at the grassroots open the possibility that the tangible gains of political reform reach the average citizen. This too is relevant to the deepening and even consolidation of democratic changes. Greater responsiveness to local needs implies improvements in both life satisfaction and the distribution of societal resources. Research by Inglehart (1989) and Muller and Seligson (1994) indicates that both of these are important factors in the persistence of democratic rule.

The basic empirical issue which the research explores then concerns the extent to which the local-level Catholic and CCAP churches in Malawi contribute to these two processes. But how do the churches influence these processes? More directly, how can we assess their contribution to local political life? In this study, I devote attention to two distinct "roles" through which churches can shape political life. These are: (1) their role as grassroots actors, embodied in the local clergy, and (2) their role as socializing institutions which affect politics through the influence of religious participation on the habits and outlooks of the larger community of faithful.

In focusing on churches as actors, the project is concerned with the behavior of the institutions as witnessed at the local level. Specifically, do the Catholic and Presbyterian clergy undertake efforts to improve political conditions at the grassroots? As much research indicates, the actions of clergy are often important first steps in generating changes in the character of politics in grassroots communities (Levine 1992; Calhoun-Brown 1994; Stewart-Gambino 1992a).

Efforts by the clergy to improve grassroots political conditions can be witnessed in a number of ways. It might involve highly visible steps such as serving as an advocate for local interests, thereby increasing state responsiveness to the grassroots. It might

also involve the type of issues which the clergy raise in their interchanges with the faithful. Preaching on an issue of local concern can for instance have the important effects of validating felt needs or raising public awareness about an issue. Moreover, the actions of clergy in their pastoral work can be of importance. As studies of the Catholic Church in Latin America instruct, clerical efforts to link the exercise and organization of religious life with earthly concerns can engender small but significant changes in political practices and habits at the grassroots. For certain Latin American clerics, such efforts included grounding Christian teaching within the context of local problems, devoting regular attention to social, as opposed to traditional moral or salvational issues, and encouraging organization to address such issues (Levine 1992; Mainwaring and Wilde 1989; Mainwaring 1986). Indeed, this point about the significance of everyday ministerial practices is not lost on certain of Malawi's clergy. Take the comments of this Malawian priest:

I used to think that to address the political problems the clergy ought to challenge the government or write a pastoral letter. Now I have seen that changes from above are purely cosmetic, I think the most basic change are changes from below. That's why I have taken refuge in these people; *through the basic Christian communities to work with the grassroots for change.*⁴

In short, what the clergy actually do in their communities is an important issue to explore when assessing how churches contribute to local-level political life. This is the first empirical question which this dissertation attempts to answer.

The second aspect of the churches' local-level role concerns what might be called their socializing effect. In this respect the churches are treated not as actors, but as institutions which can shape politically relevant habits and practices in society. The

⁴ Interview, March 17, 1996.

research explores the relationship between religious participation and patterns of political culture and participation at the local level.

In targeting this aspect of the churches' role, the analytical lens shifts from the clergy to the larger body of persons who make up "the faithful." The key issue concerns whether their involvement in these churches has any impact on their political efficacy and/or organizational activities. A large body of research indicates that religious participation can play an important role in both encouraging and discouraging such processes (Burdick 1992; Ireland 1991; Langton 1986; Levine 1986, 1992; Putnam 1993; Schoffeleers 1991; Verba, Shlozman, Brady, and Nie 1993; Widner 1994). Do members of the CCAP and Catholic Church obtain experiences and cultural messages which can empower them to participate in the political process, voice their interests, or engage in forms of collective organization? Such are critical components of democratic political cultures and also crucial steps to bringing local concerns into the political process.

In sum, in empirically assessing the contribution of churches to local-level political conditions, the research takes two tacks. First, it analyzes the churches as actors and explores the extent of clergy efforts to improve the quality of political life for citizens in their communities. Second, it treats the churches as socializing institutions and assesses the impact of religious participation on the capacities and willingnesses of local citizens to participate in politics, voice their interests, and engage in collective organization.

Approaching the Theoretical Question(s)

The primary goal of this dissertation is not simply to offer an empirical depiction of how Malawi's Presbyterian and Catholic Churches contribute to grassroots politics, but to provide theoretical explanations of why they play the kind of political roles that they do. What are the factors that shape the contribution of the local-level CCAP and Catholic Churches to political life?

In seeking to address this theoretical question the project employs a broad analytical framework which directs attention to three different types of factors: institutional, religious, and social. At the outset however, it needs to be recognized that while these factors obtain central consideration, the analytical framework is nonetheless applied in a very broad and flexible sense. In many ways, the framework is used simply to direct the reader to specific issues which need to be considered when investigating emerging political role of churches.

One of the reasons for adopting this type of broad framework lies in my conceptualization of the churches as both actors and socializing institutions. Because the research examines two different empirical aspects of the churches' local-level role, the analysis necessarily draws on discrete (and in some respects, dissimilar) theoretical perspectives. On one hand, we ask about the behavior of the clergy in their local communities. The theoretical question which logically follows concerns influences on this behavior. In this respect, the dissertation draws on literature which speaks to the specific issue of why clergy undertake the political actions that they do. On the other hand, we ask questions about the socializing effect of these institutions on grassroots citizens. This in turn requires us to theoretically address how churches shape patterns of

participation and culture in society and why some church experiences are more conducive than others to enhancing the political efficacy and organizational capacities of local citizens. The body of literature which informs this part of the inquiry deals specifically with the socializing roles of religious institutions.

The critical issue to recognize is that there are different dynamics at work at the different levels of research. Certain theoretical issues apply solely to the investigation of behavior of the clergy; while others apply solely to the socializing effect of the churches. Thus, even though the study is anchored on the framework described above, specific hypotheses and theoretical propositions are analyzed and detailed in the different sections which deal respectively with the different aspects of the churches' local-level roles.

This said, it is important to offer some initial perspective on the broader factors to which I direct the reader's attention in this study. In the first place, the study considers the importance of institutional factors. In this respect, I refer to the characteristics of the larger ecclesiastical organizations of which the local-level churches are a part. One example of an institutional variable explored in this study is that of the larger tenor or priorities of the macro-institutions (national, regional, diocesan). How might the specific dictates or emphases of church leaders shape the local-level behavior of clerical representatives? Yet another institutional variable under consideration is that of the specific design of the ecclesiastical organization. This is especially important for this study as there are significant differences between the two churches under investigation--both in terms of their organizational frameworks as well as how authority is distributed within those frameworks. How might the more decentralized character of the Presbyterian Church affect the behavior of the local clergy when compared to hierarchical

Catholic Church? Similarly, how might such peculiarities of institutional design shape the in-church experiences of local-level citizens?

Secondly, the project explores how religious factors shape the contribution of churches to local-level political life. By this, I refer to both subjective belief systems about the transcendental, as well as the types of psychological and emotional experiences associated with religious practices. At the risk of sounding trite, churches are associated first and foremost with such dimensions of religion. As such, it seems plausible to hypothesize that the political role of the local-level church will be informed by distinctly religious factors. On one hand, this suggests that the behavior of local-level clergy will be guided by their own religious ideas about how they should intervene in society and politics. On the other hand, it raises the possibility that religious experiences at the grassroots will have a central impact on the political behavior and outlooks of citizens.

It deserves noting that there is some degree of irony in my emphasis on locating the importance of the religious variable in civil society--itself a concept laden with positive normative connotations. Classic theories of political development tended to disregard the potentially constructive role which religion could play in political life. Indeed, where religion was discussed, it was viewed as largely as a negative influence--at best further pacifying subject cultures, at worst undermining the development of modern national identities. In many ways, this project offers an important corrective to that earlier literature. Rather than supposing that religion plays any sort of preordained role, I maintain that one must analyze the content of religious ideas and experiences. Moreover, I situate this variable within a broader institutional and--as described below--social context.

The final factor then concerns the larger social context in which churches are embedded, and more specifically, their relationship to that social context. Much as churches are religious institutions, they also exist in and are part of a larger social environment. And although church leaders may wish otherwise, social influences do not leave themselves outside of the cathedral or local prayer house. This requires us to consider the salience of social influences on local-level churches. As will be seen, social influences can actually undermine the ability of churches to contribute positively to local-level political life. This is true on one hand in so far as the local clergy are at times captured by social relations and embedded in social processes which in turn inhibit their capacity and willingness to work for local concerns. It is also true in regards to the socializing effect of churches on the political cultures and behaviors of grassroots citizens. To the extent that disempowering tendencies in society replicate themselves in local church practices, these same churches prove unable to promote political efficacy among local citizens.

As will be seen, attention to all three of these factors allows us to make sense of the kind of contributions which the churches make at the local level. To be sure, there is also considerable interaction between these factors. Many religious ideas, for instance, are linked to specific dynamics in the social environment. Moreover, institutional designs lend themselves to particular kinds of religious experiences at the grassroots. Sorting out the kinds of roles that these factors play is a key task of the study.

A Note on Methodology

As should be clear at this point, the case studies of the CCAP - Blantyre Synod and the Catholic Church are not ends in and of themselves, but means to the larger goal of theoretical understanding. That is, it is through these case studies that I seek to offer broader theoretical insights about the factors which inform churches' activities and influence in grassroots politics. This involves specifying not only which factors shape the political role of local churches, but also explicating how they do so.

To be sure, given the narrow empirical scope of the inquiry, there are necessarily limits to the generalizability of the dissertation's conclusions. The aim of the research, however, is less to offer definitive statements about the variables which determine the political contribution (or non-contribution) of these organizations at the grassroots. Instead, through these case studies, I intend to explore and present the range of issues which need to be considered when seeking to understand the emerging political role of churches--especially in the African context. In George's (1979) words, the studies help to "learn more about the complexities of the problem studied, to develop further the existing explanatory framework, and to refine and elaborate the initially available theory employed (36)." In this broader sense, the value of the case studies obtains primarily at the heuristic level; they will help to evaluate theoretical perspectives on the political role of churches and present propositions to guide future inquiry. Given the paucity of systematic inquiry and understanding about local churches and politics in Africa, this is especially warranted.

The use of two case studies is especially important in this respect. As will become evident, several insights emerge from the comparative process. For instance, by

focusing both on a hierarchical and a decentralized church, the study is able to explore the impact ecclesiastical institutional structure on both clergy behavior and the functioning of local religious organizations. Much the same, attention to two different churches allows a deeper probing of the impact that various theological visions have at the grassroots.

It should be recognized as well that, owing partly to the dual empirical focus of the research, no single data-gathering procedure was used for the study. Thus, as with specific theoretical propositions, more precise descriptions of data-gathering procedures--and the limits thereof--emerge in the chapters which follow. Suffice it at this point to say that the exploratory nature of the research required that varied techniques be employed to answer the empirical and theoretical questions raised above.

The Outline of the Study

After a brief chapter describing the national context in which the study was conducted, the dissertation is divided into two sections. The first section explores the churches as political actors and focuses on the local-level Presbyterian and Catholic clergy. The research assesses the extent to which local clergy undertake efforts to improve the quality of grassroots political life, and more importantly, attempts to explain their behaviors in these regards. In the second part of the study, the research focus shifts. Here the attention is devoted to the socializing effect of the churches on local citizens. The research empirically assesses the extent to which participation in the churches encourages organizational activities and political efficacy among citizens. Beyond this, the project examines why the local Catholic and Presbyterian Churches have impacts that they do in these regards.

CHAPTER 2

MALAWI: STATE, SOCIETY, AND POST-AUTHORITARIAN POLITICS

For three decades, Malawi remained off the beaten path of most scholars of African politics. The reasons for this were quite simple. Under the rule of the Life President, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, any research on political issues was strictly forbidden. The image that emerged was that of a quiet conservative polity, albeit under one of the continent's most effective authoritarian systems. Only with democratic changes in 1994 has research on Malawian political life at the level of society become a possibility.¹

This chapter offers a portrayal of the national setting in which the dissertation research was undertaken. The goal is in the first place to familiarize the reader with Malawi's basic socio-economic, historical and political contexts. In the second place, and more importantly, the chapter offers a depiction of some of the key issues confronting Malawi's new democracy, especially as they pertain to conditions at the grassroots. This in turn sets the stage for the analysis of the role of local-level Presbyterian and Catholic churches undertaken in the remainder of the dissertation.

¹ This is not to suggest that no effort was made at the interpretive level to discuss Malawian politics. See for example Hodder-Williams (1974), Williams (1978), and Mhone (1992). However, systematic analysis of political life--particularly that "beyond the state"--was almost non-existent.

The Socio-Economic Reality

At the outset, it needs to be recognized that the basic condition underlying life for the bulk of the population in Malawi is that of desperate poverty. On a continent which is typified by high levels of destitution, Malawi represents the poorest of the poor. The casual observer of the country might not detect this at first glance. Most roads in and out of the capital, Lilongwe, lack the potholes which characterize infrastructure in neighboring countries. Buildings in the urban centers are relatively new and well-maintained. In terms of economic growth indicators, moreover, the country fared relatively well for its first three decades of independence. Whereas Africa as whole recorded growth rates of about 1 percent from 1960 to the mid 1980s, Malawi boasted a growth rate of 4.6 percent per annum for the similar period (Pryor and Chipeta 1990). Despite these indicators, a mere scratching of the surface reveals the extent of the destitution which confronts the population of Malawi.

At any given time during the 1990s, and by most given measures, Malawi ranked among the ten poorest countries of the world (see e.g. World Bank 1998). Even for the region, basic quality of life indices are disturbingly low. Table 2-1 below compares important social and economic indicators of Malawi with those of its neighbors.

As we can see, Malawi fares poorly by virtually every measure: purchasing power parity infant mortality, the maternal mortality rate, and life expectancy. In addition, levels of child malnutrition are among the highest in the region. One out of every two children (under five years of age) in Malawi is said to have stunted growth, while one out of every four is underweight. One in five dies before their fifth birthday (World Bank 1995).

Table 2-1: Selected Social Indicators

Country	Per Capita GNP at PPP*	Infant Mortality	Maternal Mortality	Life Expectancy Male/Female
Malawi	\$700	134 (1992)	620	43/43
Kenya	\$1,100	62 (1993)	650+	57/60
Zimbabwe	\$2,280	53 (1994)	283	55/57
Zambia	\$890	107 (1992)	283	44/45
Tanzania	no data	92 (1992)	530	49/52

Source: World Development Report 1998

*Purchasing Power Parity (US = \$28,740)

+Alternative measure used--data may reflect this.

With 85 percent of its population located in rural areas, it is here that one confronts the most dire manifestations of Malawi's economic situation. Among rural residents, the per capita income stands at approximately \$55.00 per year. More telling, the World Bank (1995) estimates that upwards of 30 percent of the rural population is unable to meet basic caloric needs. Added to this, population densities are the third highest in Africa (Decalo 1998). 40 percent of all rural small holders hold plots less than .5 hectares in size--below the minimum estimated to support a rural household. And with a population growth rate of 3.3 percent per annum, this situation is destined to become much worse (World Bank 1995).

An equally important statistic concerns the relative distribution of economic rewards in the country. Malawi has the highest level of income inequality of any country in southern Africa. The Gini coefficient for national distribution of expenditures is .62. This places Malawi just behind Brazil, which records a coefficient of .63. Comparative figures are provided below.

Table 2-2: Gini Coefficients for Selected Southern African Countries

Country	Gini Coefficient
Malawi	.62
South Africa	.55
Zimbabwe	.57
Tanzania	.59
Zambia	.44

Source: World Bank (1995)

The sources of Malawi's economic problems are complex and numerous. Malawi has few of the resources which some of its neighbors can boast--ample land, mineral wealth, or sea access. Historically, Malawians have left to work in these other more vibrant economies--such that at the time of independence up to 40 percent of the adult male population was estimated to be working outside of the country. In the face of this, few ever suspected Malawi to ever realize "development", much less economic viability.

This said, the desperate socio-economic condition of rural residents cannot be divorced from post-colonial development strategy pursued by the regime of Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Under Banda's rule, the distribution of economic rewards and resources was decidedly structured against the interests of average citizens in the rural areas. For instance, in contrast to other leaders in the region, Banda made no pretense of expanding social services in the country. As a government development policy report from 1986 reads, "Malawi's development policies have emphasized economic growth and economic efficiency. Social service expenditure in health, education, water supply, housing, and social welfare has been tightly constrained" (cited in Mhone 1992: 11). The impact of this de-emphasis has had ramifications into the post-Banda era. Secondary school

enrollments remain very low compared to the rest of Africa. At the primary level, student to teacher ratios are much higher. And while public health spending has been comparable with the rest of Africa, the World Bank reports that such spending has clearly favored urban areas at the expense of rural dwellers (World Bank 1995).²

The bias against the rural poor was most evident in Banda's larger approach to agriculture. In particular, Banda's "growth-oriented" developmental strategy allowed for the enrichment of the small political elite, while the vast majority subsisted in conditions of deepening and desperate poverty. The regime focused its efforts on the creation of a large estate sector to fuel agricultural development. Vast estates for tobacco, tea, and sugar emerged as a central feature of the political economy under the Banda regime. On one hand, these represented key components of Banda's patronage scheme. Ministers and other loyal elites were awarded tracts of land and expected to oversee their development. On the other, the estate sector allowed for a relatively stable resource base from which the regime could draw income. Indeed, while the estates represent about 20 percent of the land, two-thirds of all export earnings are obtained from this sector. As market principles guided their management practices, the estates remained relatively efficient producers of agricultural commodities throughout and beyond the Banda era.

This development approach was not without its costs for rural dwellers. As the estate sector expanded, so shrank smallholder shares of land. Between 1970 and 1984, the percent of arable land occupied by estates grew from 2 to 16 percent (Hirschmann

² The relative lack of effort to address health conditions is all the more striking when one considers the prevalence of HIV and AIDS among Malawi's estimated 12 million citizens. The World Bank reports that there are 225,000 cases of full-blown AIDS in the country. By the year 2000 it is estimated that two million people will be affected with HIV (World Bank 1995).

1990: 470). Concomitantly, customary lands under cultivation shrank by 40 percent for roughly the same period (Mhone 1992:13). As one can imagine, in this process, the number of rural dwellers converted to estate workers also increased. Hirschmann (1990) estimates that the percent of males in full-time employment increased from 13 to 31 from 1966 to 1977. Moreover, small holders were relegated largely to the production of food crops--maize in particular. Their ability to effectively cultivate and market cash crops such as tobacco was severely constrained by government regulations and biases in credit and agricultural extension (see Hirschmann 1990 and Mhone 1992 for a more elaborate description). One result to this day is a lack of diversification within the peasant sector, as well as limited knowledge of growing and marketing cash crops among the average small holders.

With the implementation of structural adjustment programs in the 1990s, the bite of destitution has become even more acute for rural dwellers. Price increases for maize--though intended to benefit the small maize producers--did not translate into better living conditions for rural residents. The primary reason for this was the concomitant increase in fertilizer prices, previously subsidized. Only those farmers who could afford fertilizer saw maize yields comparable with previous years. Many others actually became net consumers of maize, as for the first time in many years they could not apply fertilizer. More generally, economic liberalization caused increases in other essential commodities such as salt, cooking oil, and clothing.

Both historically and in the current day then, the average citizen in Malawi has faced intractable poverty. As we will see in the sections which follow, the repression and predation which characterized Banda's rule of Malawi in many ways appeared logical

handmaidens to the economic arrangements he helped to craft. However, changes in the political system have done little to either ameliorate basic economic conditions or facilitate the access of rural dwellers to national resources. From the perspective of many, while the changes in politics have been important, the dividends of democracy in terms of tangible improvements in the quality of life in rural areas are far from realization.

Banda: State, Society, and the Grassroots

From 1964 to 1992, all power within the Malawian state circulated around Life President Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Among Africa's first generation autocrats, Banda was not only among the most interesting, but also the most effective. Rising to power with Nyasaland's (Malawi) nationalist movement in the early 1960s, Banda constructed a political system which left the monopoly of political power in his hands alone. In comparison to other countries of the region, relatively high levels of stability and marked degrees of state control over society were distinguishing characteristics of Banda's Malawi. By 1993, however, not even this bastion of autocracy could withstand the pressures for political change which surfaced in other parts of Africa earlier in the decade.

Shortly after Banda's ascension to state power in 1964, it became apparent that pre-independence visions of an open political system with limits on state power would not be realized. Political upheavals in the wake of independence served as Banda's pretext to curtail basic civic and political freedoms, smother any potential for organized opposition, and institutionalize his own supremacy within the state. By 1970, Banda was constitutionally the President-for-Life, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) was the only

political party in the country, and judicial and legislative checks on the President's power had been completely removed. The resulting character of political life in the country reflected both Banda's own uncompromising and conservative disposition as well as more generic power political tactics to maintain his status within the political system.

A mix of force and patronage served as Banda's primary means of consolidating power at the level of the state. With relative frequency, ranking political insiders who threatened his primacy were removed, imprisoned, or executed. Few of the political elite could rest easily in their situation as even the slightest suspicion of designs on power could bring their downfall. Unsurprisingly, complete deference to Banda became the rule of thumb for his lieutenants. Reflecting his own sense of superiority, real decision making power within the state lay almost exclusively in Banda's hands. At any given time he held up to four ministerial portfolios. Moreover, no minister could effectively implement a decision without approval of the Life President (see Decalo 1998; Williams 1978).³

As discussed above, Banda further consolidated his rule by dispensing economic assets to his coterie of followers. Those who ascended to ranking positions within the regime were awarded with land or other money making enterprises. In all cases, such individuals owed their fortunes solely to Banda. Moreover their continued economic

³ The role of the military in Banda's Malawi is in and of itself a fascinating topic of inquiry. Civil-military stability was an additional hallmark of his rule. Much of this had to do with his very gradual Africanization of the military--through the mid-1970s, the top officers remained European. In addition, however, the army was kept in check by the party apparatus and its armed wing--the Malawi Young Pioneers (and the army also checked any designs on power by the latter). For a fuller elaboration see Decalo (1998).

success revolved around his presence at the head of the state which insured stability and sanction for their business activities (Chisiza 1992; Mhone 1992).

Equally important to Banda's longevity were the levels of control which his regime realized over society as a whole. With the exception of churches, independent social organizations did not exist nor were they allowed to develop in Malawi. The primary political vehicle of the regime, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), was organized down to the grassroots, with cells and branches in virtually every village and township. Its functions were numerous. For one, the party orchestrated highly visible shows of support for the regime. This included organizing rallies for Banda and encouraging displays of fawning adulation from the populace. Moreover, the party provided the regime with an organizational linkage between itself and the local level. In this sense, the party served to attach citizens to the regime--even if meaningful participation was seriously limited. Finally, the party was used to monitor the activities of average citizens and ensure their material and affective support for the regime. Party cards, for example, were required of all persons wishing to board a bus or enter a market. Any signs of displeasure with the regime were reported to local party officials who carried authority to exact payments from citizens and even call for their imprisonment at the hands of local police.

The role of the party in structuring participation was complemented by the use of an extensive security apparatus which served the more basic order maintaining requirements of the regime. A special branch of the MCP, the Malawi Young Pioneers, exercised more specific monitoring and surveillance of subjects. Numbering approximately 20,000, the MYP were found at bus stations, market places, or any place

where significant numbers of persons would gather. And their role in “keeping the peace” was backed by clear messages from on-high that political dissension--or indeed a lack of visible support for Banda--was unacceptable. As the President himself commented early on in his leadership:

If to maintain political stability and efficient administration, I have to detain 10,000, 100,000, I will do it. I want nobody to misunderstand me. I will detain anyone who is interfering with the political stability of the country.⁴

The message was backed by actions which extended beyond Banda's purges of suspected opponents among the political and administrative elite. In 1967 and 1972, for instance, the Malawi Young Pioneers waged a violent campaign of repression against the Jehovah's Witnesses, owing to the group's refusals to hang Banda's picture in their places of worship. 20,000 followers of the faith are estimated to have left the country at this time (Africa Watch 1990).

Public political discourse in Banda's Malawi reflected an effective system of ideological control. The government-held press and radio stations devoted the lion's share of their energies to extolling the virtues and accomplishment of the Life President. Speaking ill of the President or even discussing his age were seditious acts. Kamuzu's name adorned the national stadium, international airport, institutions of higher learning, and main roads. To be sure, this cult of personality appeared quite surreal to the western observer. But the ideology of kamuzuism and “kamuzu knows best” were quite real in Malawi, serving to instill both fear and docility among the population. Remarking on this, a leading news magazine on Africa commented as late as 1992, “the extent to

⁴ Cited in Short (1974: 265).

which Banda has reduced his subjects to a tranquilized unthinking state is one of the most unfortunate aspects of this country.”⁵

Some have argued that the worst excesses of the Banda regime were witnessed in his treatment of potential rivals within high political circles, while persons in the rural areas did not suffer to the same extent (Decalo 1998). It is true that manifest human rights abuses were relatively uncommon in rural areas and a systematic terrorizing of the populace never took place. And as visitors to the country would often comment, as a whole, Malawians appeared quite content with their situation; as evidenced in their “docile”, “quiet” or “deferential” (see, for example, Theroux 1989 or Decalo 1998). In many ways, this bespoke the efficacy of the system of control which was in place.

But it needs to be further recognized that the average citizen did bear considerable hardship under this system. As I detailed above, the economic difficulties which confronted rural dwellers were not divorced from Banda’s own development/patronage strategies. While most Malawians subsisted at the bare minimum of existence, the political elite, along with Banda, lived opulent and indulgent lifestyles, fueled by the regime’s control over the export sectors and distributional networks in the national economy. Banda himself had seventeen residences scattered throughout the country. And by the late 1980s state funding for governmental residences exceeded that of expenditures on health care.⁶

⁵ Heather Hill (1992)

⁶ The stories about the excesses of Banda and his cronies are legion. One shopping trip to London--made up of over 200 persons--even attracted the attention of the American news program 20/20 as the MCP elite went on buying binge at famous department stores. Banda himself reportedly had over 1000 ties from Harrods.

Thus whatever growth occurred in the national economy accrued solely to the minority at the top of the political system. Moreover, the problems and desperate poverty of common people were outside of the boundaries of acceptable discussion. According to the official discourse, hunger and poverty did not exist in Malawi, this of course owing to the leadership of the Banda.⁷ And statements to the contrary were dangerous, as they threatened the myth of Kamuzu's benevolent and successful rule.

On a regular basis, moreover, citizens experienced the predatory excesses of the regime. Party thugs routinely extracted monies for new party cards from persons moving outside of their villages. Indeed, even pregnant women were made to purchase the cards for unborn babies. During party meetings or visits to rural areas by political elites, party members forced people to contribute livestock, money, or time for the event. Those who failed to do so were beaten or jailed.

In short, for its first three decades of independence, Malawi experienced a unique and encompassing form of authoritarian rule; a system which not only curtailed citizen opportunities to speak and act in the political system but also invalidated perceptions of their own needs. Modes of state interaction with society often entailed both predation and arbitrary exercises of power--all of this backed by the ever present threat of repression and extensive ideological programing.

⁷ Witness the comments detailed in the newspaper *Odini* in 1990. Banda stated, "so long as rain falls in a normal manner, there will be no hunger or poverty in this country." See "Kulibe njala ndi umphawi"(1990). Other supportive evidence of this conscious removal of poverty from national discourse is provided in Ross (1995a).

The Change

In early 1992, Malawi appeared to be one of the last holdouts among Africa's transforming polities. The internal pressures for political liberalization which had generated important reforms in other neighboring countries were simple absent. Scarcely had the words "democracy" been uttered, apart from calls made by the exiled political opposition. The primary, yet locally unspoken, question for political observers concerned the likely contestants for state power once Banda passed away. His estimated age was 93 in early the 1990s.

The silence broke on March 8, 1992. On this date, the seven bishops of the Catholic Church issued a pastoral letter which was openly critical of the regime, its practices, and the distribution of wealth in the country. To this day, the Catholic letter is viewed as the starting point for political change in the country. Read in every Catholic parish in the country, the attention devoted to social and political problems was unprecedented in Malawi's history. For example, on the gap between rich and poor in the country, the letter read, "the life (of many people) is a constant struggle for survival. At the same time a minority enjoys the fruits of development and can afford to live in luxury and wealth."⁸ The letter also pointed to issues such as shortcomings in the educational and health system, responsibility for which lay with the state. Finally, the letter expressly targeted the political climate in the country:

Nobody should ever have to suffer reprisals for honestly expressing and living up to their convictions: intellectual, religious, or political. We can only regret that this is not always the case in our country.... Academic freedom is seriously restricted, exposing injustices can be considered a betrayal; revealing some ills of our society is seen as slandering the country; monopoly of the mass media and

⁸ "Living Our Faith," cited in Ross (1995c: 16).

censorship prevent the expression of dissenting views; some people have paid dearly for their political opinions; access to public places like markets, hospitals, bus depots, etc., is frequently denied to those who cannot produce a party card; forced donations have become a way of life. ("Living Our Faith," cited in Ross 1995c: 16)

They continued, calling for changes in the country:

Participation in the life of the country is not only a right, it is also a duty that each Christian should be proud to assume and exercise responsibly. . . . However, participation will remain a fiction without the existence of adequate channels of expression and action: an independent press, open forums of discussion, free association of citizens for social and political purposes, and the like.⁹

At the level of society, the initial response to the church's letter was one of shock. This was followed by outbreaks of support for the message by disparate elements of Malawian society. Students at the university erupted in jubilation, leading to its closure for the first time in history. Political elites seeking to challenge Banda found both legitimation and inspiration in the words of the Catholic letter, leading some to speak out in support of the Bishops. Yet it also took little time for the state to respond in a manner consistent with past practices. Issuing a written response entitled "No Mercy," the regime deemed possession of the pastoral letter a seditious act. Thereafter, the Catholic Church was isolated as the bishops were placed under house arrest. Other internal opponents of the regime who had arisen in the wake of the Catholic letter were effectively silenced.

The efforts of the regime served to only temporarily curtail pressures for political change. In May--two months after the issuing of the Catholic letter--Malawi's donors froze all foreign aid pending progress on political reform. More important, however, was the emergence of an effective internal movement for liberalization. Here the impetus fell to the Presbyterian churches in the country, which heretofore had remained silent.

⁹ See Ross 1995a for a review.

In June 1992, the Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), with the support of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, issued their own letter calling for political change. In it they directly referenced and voiced their support of the Catholic statement three months earlier. Their explicit detailing of problems in the country was less elaborate. But the tone of the letter was much more direct, specifically calling on the regime to initiate fundamental changes in its institutions and practices. The government, it said, should, "end the practice of detention without trial..., allow freedom of expression, and encourage open discussion of the nation's future." More fundamentally, the letter called for the formation of a commission to oversee the "structural reform" of the political system.¹⁰

As the regime stalled in its response to the letter and its demands, the leaders of the two Presbyterian Synods worked behind the scenes to organize a united front for change. The outcome was the formation in August of 1992 of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC), constituted of members of the CCAP, the Catholic Church, and other groups in society. This pressure group, in turn, served as the central vehicle to challenge the Banda regime and coordinate efforts to promote the process of political reform (Ross 1995b).

Greater details of the churches' activities in the process of change are provided in the chapters which follow. At this point, suffice it to say that their initiatives helped to set in motion a process of interaction between the government and advocates for democracy. While the regime sought to thwart the process of change, the internal

¹⁰ "The Nation of Malawi in Crisis: The Church's Concern." Letter from The Livingstonia Synod and Blantyre Synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to His Excellency, President Banda, June 2, 1992. See also Ross (1995a) for a review.

movement for reform gained momentum and visibility and external pressures mounted on the government. Gradually, significant transformations occurred. The turnkey event occurred in January 1993 when Banda announced that a referendum would be held to decide for or against the continuation of the single-party system. Fierce campaigning followed over the next six months. Democratic activists were threatened and imprisoned as the government sought to control and orchestrate the referendum process. In the end however, the referendum, held on June 14, 1993 resulted in 65 percent of all Malawian supporting the transition to multi-party politics. A year later, general elections were held, leading to defeat of the Malawi Congress Party. The new government headed by the United Democratic Front (UDF) and Bakili Muluzi, one-time Secretary General of the Malawi Congress Party, entered office in May of 1994.

The New Malawi: State, Society, and the Grassroots

"Everything has changed in Malawi"--so reads a State Department cable from early 1995. What only three years prior was a closed political system and highly regimented society, had been transformed. Four major newspapers could be purchased on the streets of the major urban centers. The more repressive elements of the state security apparatus, particularly the dreaded MYP, had been forcibly disbanded. The Parliament, which had been a rubber stamp organ under Banda, was now occupied by three parties who engaged in lively and sometimes highly contentious debates. And issues such as past human rights abuses, the conditions of poverty in rural areas, and the new rights and responsibilities of citizens became topics of discussion within the national public discourse.

As with all new, or indeed any, democracies, however, Malawi's system was not without its problems. Several of these problems were highly visible and raised questions about the whether "democracy" could provide effective or even stable governance in Malawi. Only a year after the inauguration of Muluzi, for example, partisan squabbles undermined the functioning of the Parliament and actually led to outbreaks of political violence during parliamentary by-elections. In addition, accusations of state level corruption surfaced with relative frequency in the press, raising the specter that the entire probity of public office might be quickly undermined in the newly opened political process.¹¹

At the less visible level were other problems which pertained more to the emerging character of political life at the local level. Certain dynamics and shortcomings within Malawi's new democracy raised the question as to whether the system would generate basic improvements in the quality of life for local-level citizens. Not only did this bode poorly for the immediate welfare of the grassroots in Malawi, it also haunted the longer term prospects for the deepening and consolidating of democracy. Two problems were particularly acute in these respects.

The first of these problems concerned the emerging character of state-local relations. Whereas the pattern of these relations had been typified by predation and sometimes repression under the Banda, the new system might aptly be characterized as a politics of neglect. The interests of the common person appeared to be shelved as key

¹¹ Interestingly, as of the time of writing there has been little talk of military intervention into politics.

political actors concerned themselves largely with the machinations of high politics or pursuit of their own private concerns.

The government's continued failure to establish a new system of local government provides one example of the emerging patterns of state-local relations. As of the time of writing, the government of Bakili Muluzi has failed to follow through with promises to implement local elections for district level office holders who would have some authority to oversee the administering of local development projects and state services. Four years after Malawi's democratic changes, formal authoritative structures of local governance remain absent. The reasons for the government's inaction are quite understandable from a pure politics point of view. An additional tier of authority within the structure of the state implies the wider dispersion of power away from national officials. Not only would this place greater demands on the center, it might even lead to a situation where the government opponents controlled local political arenas--with clear implications for subsequent national elections. Moreover, the addition of local government authorities would have disrupted the patronage channels which linked the government to various local interests through either the party or the administrative channels of the unitary state.

In this situation, the primary state agents responsible for dealing with local issues remained "District Administrative Offices" which organizationally extended down from the Office of President and Cabinet. Development projects, construction of schools and health facilities--these are the types of issues which District Administrators would help coordinate. In so doing, they interacted with local communities through two different mechanisms. On one hand, they worked with traditional authorities who had some authority--in the eyes of the Ministry--to speak on the needs of areas. On the other,

community level meetings were organized to consult with citizens on various development projects for the area. In either scenario, however, local actors carried very little real authority. Traditional authorities have no formal power vis a vis initiatives from administrative officers. Meetings with local citizens were consultative and at that, ad hoc and non-routinized.

Thus, for local citizens in Malawi's new democracy, there was no formal, state-linked, structure of governance in place in their communities. Real decision-making power about important local issues lay with state administrators and bureaucrats. Formal arenas for communicating grievances to the state and undertaking local efforts to solve problems were simply absent.

Members of Parliament might have assumed an especially important role in this situation. In hearing the needs of citizens they might have been able to influence, either formally or informally, the provision of state services to their areas. But this too was an area where state-local relations proved to be problematic. Popular perception held that, apart from dispensing politically-motivated patronage, M.P.s took little interest in the plight of their areas. Local newspapers castigated sessions of Parliament during which M.P.s would debate impertinent issues, such as the changing of the national flag. Political cartoons depicted parliamentary sessions at worst as sheer buffoonery. At other times, MPs were portrayed as simply out of touch with the needs of average people (witness the cartoons in Figures 2-1 and 2-2).

In the view of many citizens, moreover, representatives were more concerned with their own personal aggrandizement than with addressing issues such as poverty or crime, the latter of which became an increasing problem in the new democracy. As one citizen

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Figure 2-1: Cartoon Depicting Parliament: *The Nation* (March 22, 1996).



Figure 2-2: Cartoon Questioning State Accountability. *The Nation* (Nov. 14, 1996).

described her MP, “he has never visited us .. he’s just sitting in Blantyre (commercial center of Malawi) drinking milky tea.” Another complained about a different MP:

He took 50,000 Kwacha in poverty alleviation funds for the constituency and bought tobacco. Now he’s driving around in a new car. We here in the villages just suffer while the big ones are eating.

In short, the democracy that was emerging in Malawi appeared relatively unresponsive to local needs. As such, the possibility that the system might provide tangible improvements for grassroots citizens was limited. But this problem of state-local relations carried implications far beyond the immediate welfare of the grassroots. It also haunted the long-term prospects of Malawi’s democratic experiment as a whole. A non-responsive political elite would do little to alleviate--and might even exacerbate-- the extreme structural inequality in Malawi’s socio-economic system. As scholars have argued, these kinds of socio-economic conditions create an infertile environment for democracy (Muller and Seligson 1994). Moreover, the entire legitimacy of the new system was threatened by this situation.¹² Over time, jubilation over Banda’s removal dissipated and was replaced by emerging cynicism about politics and the mercantilism of the political elite. Witness the comments of this small business owner who, while lamenting inattention from the political elite, nonetheless had a perceptive perspective of why this system was not working in his country:

Democracy is for you millionaires. It is not something that works here in Africa. You see it’s all about money here. These guys in power just want money.

On a different occasion, another citizen echoed:

¹² Diamond (1996) argues that legitimacy is critical to democratic responsiveness and consolidation. Inglehart (1988) similarly emphasizes that a high level of satisfaction with the political system is an important component of democratic longevity.

Politics in this country is just for the toilet. We are happy about free speech, but there is so much poverty getting worse. And these ministers have too many cars, huge bank accounts, and trips abroad.

For these citizens then, the hope that democracy might bring about a situation where the government was more responsive to local needs appeared to be evaporating. And while we can not generalize their perspective to the whole of Malawi, they are nonetheless suggestive of some of the legitimacy problems confronting the new regime.

A second problem apparent at the local level pertained to the absence of certain elements in society which might allow for the deepening and further extension of democratic gains. In local arenas, it was very clear that the interwoven cultural and organizational bases for democracy were very weak. In turn, this contributed to the larger problem of responsiveness and undermined the long term prospect for the empowerment of grassroots actors in the political process.

In the first place, many citizens lacked a sense of their own capacity and efficacy to act and speak in the political process. Many were without important skills--communicative competence, organizational experiences, or literacy--which might have facilitated their involvement in the newly opened political process. Owing to Malawi's legacy of authoritarianism, notions of challenging and making demands on those in high positions of authority remained undeveloped. Many feared taking advantage of new opportunities for voice and participation in politics. Others were simply resigned to the scenario that their voice and participation would never be able to effect change in their situation. All too often, poor citizens would respond to reports of corruption or abuses of power with a defeated jocularity, "that's Malawi."

This absence of efficacy carried implications for the emerging character of political life in Malawi. Habits of silence and submissiveness clearly facilitate the abuse of power by the powerful and allow for the relative neglect of local citizens. In this sense, the problem of governmental responsiveness would only be perpetuated if citizens failed to challenge and make demands on those political officials who were nominally responsible for dealing with their situation. Sadly, the channels and dispositions to do so were few and far between.

An equally problematic issue in this regard concerned the character of citizen relations between each other. Banda's police-like state atomized social interaction and bred a climate of fear and mistrust of the other in society. In addition, the regime had effectively curtailed local-level initiatives to organize to deal with matters of common concern. As a result, trust among citizens and critical "habits of cooperation" were minimal in the new democracy.¹³ And the reality of grinding poverty did little to ameliorate the situation. Citizen responses to problems were highly individuated, often resting on the hope that a political patron could offer assistance to deal with whatever issue confronted them.

The problem manifested itself in numerous ways, some of which will become more apparent in the chapters which follow. However, a few anecdotal references help to illustrate the issue and its potential implications.

Mrs. Chimenya is a minister's wife who came to me to ask for assistance in interpreting the application form for a "self-help" grant administered through the US

¹³ An absence of such "social capital," Putnam (1993) reminds, us bodes poorly for the future of democracy.

Embassy. Mrs. Chimenya had a business plan, but was disheartened when I advised her that the embassy self-help funds only went to local groups and not to individuals. I suggested she get together with five friends and relatives from the proposed project area to make the business a jointly run affair which would then be eligible for support from the US embassy facility. Such was simply not possible she advised me. Levels of trust in other people were simply too low, and she knew that somehow she would get cheated by the others. To this day, the project remains on paper.

Mr. Usipa and Mr. Chambo own small shops catering to different areas of a densely populated urban township. Their problems in running these businesses were numerous. Poor roads washed away by rain made deliveries of goods impossible. Crime threatened businessmen, in particular as their large stores of goods and ready supply of cash made them target for armed thugs. When I suggested that they form some sort of organization to help solve these problems they offered the following responses. Mr.

Usipa commented:

We are an isolated society, we don't cooperate. We were not allowed to even gather in twos or threes when we were under Kamuzu. So this idea of making a group or an organization is very new to us...

Mr. Chambo's approach was different, but nonetheless bespoke the serious obstacles in society to creating local organizations.

You see, many of these other business people got rich from evil ways. Some of them did it through the MCP. Others were using witchcraft. So if they know that I am not protecting my store one night, they might just come in and rob me themselves.

The problem these kinds of attitudes pose for the quality of democracy are quite obvious.

Without horizontal bonds of cooperation, problem solving remains personalized, private,

and vertically-oriented. Such a situation allows for the perpetuation of narrow patronage politics which undermine the principle of accountability of office holders to the larger public. Moreover, organizations which might improve the well-being of local citizens do not get formed. In turn, this subverts the further development of civil society organizations which might provide citizens greater resources and opportunities to act in the political process

In short, from the perspective of many citizens, while democracy had curtailed arbitrary rule and opened up political discourse, it was coming up short in the one area where hopes were perhaps highest: bringing the political system to address the needs of the common person. Those with access to the state were non-responsive or simply self-serving. Moreover, the capacity and willingness of citizens to either place their claims on political actors or develop deeper organizational resources to enrich local political life and their own development possibilities were themselves limited.

Civil Society to the Rescue?

As democratic theorists would contend, the actors and organizations of civil society *could* play a critical role in helping to overcome these kinds of problems within Malawi's new democracy. Indeed, from the functionalist perspective, helping to address such conditions and, by extension, improve the quality of democracy, is very much the *raison d'être* of civil society organizations (CSOs) (Diamond 1994; Schmitter and Karl 1991; Chazan 1992; USAID 1994; Hadenius and Ugglä 1996). On one hand, they could help to overcome the problem of governmental responsiveness to local needs. By virtue of their visibility, resources, and connections to local levels, many actors who represent civil

society organizations are well placed to serve as advocates for citizens, in effect speaking for local concerns, or, to borrow from progressive Catholicism, providing a “voice for the voiceless.” In this sense, the role of civil society organizations in interacting with the state encompasses more than their checking the latter’s repressive tendencies. It involves their helping to create patterns of governmental accountability to the larger populace (see Diamond 1994). Moreover, citizens who lack other channels or resources to make demands on political officials can work through CSOs. Here, citizens mobilize their organizations to play an intermediary role vis a vis the state—even though the organization might have other expressed purposes.¹⁴

On the other hand, civil society organizations could help to ameliorate some of the deeper threats to the quality of democracy posed by Malawi’s organizational and civic deficits at the local level. To borrow from Schmitter and Karl (1991), they would play the role of “forming better citizens.” As put forward in the literature, CSOs have the potential to increase the political awareness and efficacy of citizens, thereby facilitating their involvement and participation in public life. In addition, these organizations can stimulate the development of other associational activities at the grassroots. By helping persons to develop organizational skills and habits of cooperation, CSOs contribute to the density and vibrancy of organizational networks at the grassroots. As Tocqueville wrote, “associations may be considered large free schools where all the members of the community go to learn the general theory of association” (Tocqueville 1956: 206).

¹⁴ For a discussion of this process see Stewart-Gambino’s (1992b) elaboration of the politicization of the Catholic Church in Chile.

Such then is the general hope for civil society. And as I have indicated, such contributions to the quality of democracy were sorely needed at the grassroots of Malawi. But the question that emerges concerns whether the empirical referents of civil society on the ground actually did do all these things. And more importantly, why or why not?

These are the questions I ask of Malawi's local-level Catholic and Presbyterian churches. As I have indicated, the national level organizations played the crucial roles of both initiating, accelerating and, in some ways, presiding over Malawi's transformation to democracy at the state level. Moreover, as extensive organizations with representatives and structures reaching down to the grassroots, the churches certainly had considerable potential to play mediatory and formative roles among citizens. But to what extent did they actually help to improve the quality of democracy at the grassroots? And what informed their willingness and capacities to serve the "functions" of civil society in these respects. In answering these questions, we learn not only about churches as part of civil society, we will also gain some insight into the emerging character of political life in Africa's new democracies.

CHAPTER 3

THE LOCAL CLERGY AS POLITICAL ACTORS: INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Beneath the surface of Malawi's new multi-party system are a host of problems which raise questions about the actual quality of democracy for average citizens. At the most basic level, the institutional changes at the state have done little to ameliorate material conditions at the grassroots. Most citizens remain trapped in grinding poverty and many are without basic amenities such as clean water, decent roads, or health facilities. Beyond this, there is little immediate reason to suggest that the new political arrangements will facilitate improvements in these conditions. Owing significantly to Malawi's authoritarian legacy many at the grassroots are disempowered and lack organizational resources which might help remedy their situation. Moreover, many citizens remain neglected by those who nominally represent them in the political process. And they have neither the means nor the knowledge to access and place demands on these political officials.

This first part of the dissertation is concerned with the behavior of the Catholic Church and Blantyre Synod vis a vis these local-level political conditions. In particular, I examine the character of Presbyterian and Catholic clergy interventions into political life in their communities. To what extent do the local clergy serve positive roles as part of civil society and undertake actions which can improve the quality of democracy for

citizens at the grassroots? And more importantly, what informs their behaviors in these respects?

Attention to the behavior of the local clergy is critical if we seek to obtain a true depiction of the contribution of the Blantyre Synod and Catholic Church to local-level political life. In concrete terms, the local clergy are the true representatives of these churches on the ground. While ecclesiastical elites and authorities may enact programs or offer public statements which are pertinent to politics, such interventions are relatively far removed from local arenas. The rank and file clergy, on the other hand, with a regular presence and routine interactions at the grassroots, carry considerable potential to actually influence and even tangibly improve local-level political conditions. Consider, for instance, how clergy advocacy for a local concern, such as a borehole, can yield changes in how state officials respond to community needs. Much the same, as I indicated in the introductory chapter, clerical efforts to raise awareness among the faithful on a community issue can have important impact of validating felt needs and, indeed, spurring political action by grassroots citizens. For reasons such as these, what the clergy do in their communities, and why they do it, are important issues for analysis.

The central issues which confront the project are twofold. First, we need to obtain an assessment of the character of clergy interventions into local political life. Specifically, to what extent do they embrace and work for local-level concerns? Do they undertake actions which can increase the efficacy or awareness of citizens or encourage greater state responsiveness to local needs? Such are critical steps in the deepening and extension of tangible democratic gains to the grassroots. Moreover, such are their nominal “functions” as part of civil society.

Secondly, we need to examine the factors which inform the clergy's political behavior. Why might some clergy be more active than others in addressing local-level concerns and issues? What are the constraints on clergy activism? In answering these questions, we obtain insight into the propensity of local churches to positively contribute to grassroots political life over the long term.

Research Process

In exploring these issues, the research employed a number of data-gathering techniques. Borrowing from Anna Peterson (1997), these can be best understood by conceptualizing a number of concentric circles. Each of these represents resources to help answer the questions raised above.

The core circle of resources emerged from interviews conducted with forty-seven clergy located in central and southern Malawi. Of these forty-seven clergy, nineteen were Presbyterian ministers from the Blantyre Synod, while twenty-eight were Catholic priests, representing three different dioceses. Constraints of time, money and logistics limited our ability to select the clergy in a true "random" process. However, efforts were undertaken to obtain a sample which was not biased in terms of age, geographical location, or levels of education.

We began the process of selecting clergy for interviews by obtaining lists of all the clergy in the three respective dioceses and Synod. We then removed all those who were inaccessible by road.¹ Thereafter, two different methods were employed to choose

¹ The research was conducted during much of the rainy season which limited the ability of the research team to reach certain clergy. This did not keep us from

clergy, depending on the area of research. In some areas, diocesan and Synod boundaries did not coincide. Here, we simply chose clergy names out of a hat to create our sample.

In other areas, however, diocesan and Synod boundaries did coincide. In these cases, we further limited the population by removing all those who were residing at churches extending to westward region of the research area. By narrowing the research area, we increased the number of clergy who could be reached in one road trip. I then selected the remaining clergy names out of a hat, alternating between Catholic and Presbyterian clergy. When a Catholic priest was chosen, we automatically would include the geographically closest Presbyterian minister in the sample. Similarly, when a Presbyterian was chosen, we then included the closest Catholic clergy. The goal in this was to ease the process of research. Travel, it should be added, provided the greatest source of stress on the researcher--mentally, physically, and financially.

In all cases, the clergy who were interviewed had been in residence for at least nine months. Forty of the interviews were conducted by the author, while the remaining seven were conducted by a research assistant. No clergy refused to be interviewed and all but one of the interviews was taped. All the interviews were conducted during twenty-four to forty-eight hour stays at the homes of the clergy, and after spending at least eight hours in their presence. The goal of these extended stays was to increase levels of comfort in answering my questions.

Specific details of the questions which were asked of the clergy emerge in the pages and chapters which follow. Suffice it to say, that interviews sought, on one hand,

interviewing rural clergy who were considerably removed from the tarmac, but it did limit the number to which we had access.

to assess the character of clergy political behavior since Malawi's transition to multi-party politics. Questions attempted to gauge the extent to which clerics engaged in practices which could increase the efficacy and awareness of local citizens and foster state responsiveness to local needs. On the other hand, the clergy were asked questions designed to explore the factors which informed their behavior in these respects.

The next circle of resources resulted from simple observation techniques and unstructured conversations with clergy during my extended stays in their homes. In this sense, the method was somewhat akin to the "hanging around" described by Richard Fenno (1978) in his study of congressional representatives. This provided a rich store of qualitative and observational data regarding the lives of these clergy, the types of behaviors in which they engaged, and the influences on their political activities or, as was often the case, their "non-activities."

This qualitative and observational data was in turn augmented during extended field stays in two communities. Here, I was in regular contact with a small number of Catholic and Presbyterian clergy, intensively interacting with them and observing their daily life and activities over a long period of time. This provided additionally useful insight, particularly in helping me understand the factors guiding their behavior in the community.

The final circle consists of material pertaining to the institutional contexts in which these clergy operated. This information was accessed by reviewing print and communications media, as well as documents produced by the churches themselves. Additional information came from interviews with ranking church elites. The resulting knowledge base includes the history of the churches' political behavior, the priorities for

clerical action as enunciated from the top of the Catholic Church and Blantyre Synod, and the different currents of thought which resonated within larger institutional discourses. Thus when exploring the local clergy's behavior, I was able to relate that behavior to dynamics within and patterns of activity associated with the larger ecclesiastical organizations.

The Argument

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, my goal in this dissertation is both to provide an empirical depiction the churches' contribution to local-level political life, and, more importantly, to offer an explanation of that contribution. As such, the central arguments which I present in this first part of the dissertation pertain on one hand to the empirical character of clergy political behavior at the grassroots. On the other hand, they involve my interpretation and analysis of that behavior.

Regarding the former, when we assess the local-level political activities of the clergy, the image which emerges is twofold. In the first place, there are clear limits in the extent of clergy engagement on behalf of local concerns. That is, most clergy either do not or only minimally undertake activities which can: (a) increase the awareness and efficacy of local citizens and (b) encourage state responsiveness to local needs. In this respect, it appears that, as actors in civil society, the churches only marginally contribute to the quality of democracy at the grassroots. In the second place, despite these general limits, there are nonetheless notable variances among the clergy in the extent to which they are active on behalf of local concerns. Indeed, a select few clergy are highly active in efforts to address political issues and needs of citizens at the grassroots.

The critical task which then emerges concerns the explanation of the general limits to clergy activism, as well as the more specific variances in their behavior. In so doing, I devote attention to three previously mentioned factors (institutional, religious, and social). In the chapters which follow I describe these in greater detail. At this point suffice it to say that of these three factors, the latter two are particularly influential in shaping the extent of clergy efforts to address local-level political concerns. Institutional variables are important, but play more of a mediating role vis a vis social and religious influences on the clergy.

As to the religious influences, it needs to be recognized that the local clergy have different religious viewpoints about what they are called to do as representatives of the church. These different viewpoints in turn shape the character of their activities in their communities--including their political behavior. This helps us account for some of the important differences among the clergy in terms of their local-level activism. Certain religious ideas motivate clergy activism on behalf of community concerns to a greater extent than others.

At the same time, local clergy behavior is also shaped by the social environment of which they are part. Understanding this basic point is critical if we seek to comprehend the limits to their local-level activism. In effect, larger social influences on clergy outlooks and behaviors undermine their propensity to promote greater state accountability and citizen empowerment at the local level. This is true in two respects.

First, the larger social environment is not conducive to the development and circulation of religious ideas which encourage clergy efforts to address the socio-political concerns. There is no Malawian equivalent of a locally-inspired liberation theology.

Instead, the religious ideas and discourses which do obtain salience in Malawi lead the clergy to stress issues such as other-worldly salvation rather than this-worldly concerns, and social harmony rather than social justice.

Secondly, the clergy's embeddedness in social relations and processes serves as an additional hindrance to local activism. In this respect, the clergy need to be viewed as much as social and economic actors as religious actors or representatives of religious organizations. For example, some clergy are primarily concerned with the pursuit of their own economic security and aggrandizement. In some cases, this leads them to enter into clientelist relations with powerful local actors--thereby inhibiting the propensity of them to engage in activities which might disrupt their relationship with the former. In other cases, clergy simply focus their mental and behavioral energies to their own economic enterprises--thereby minimizing the amount of attention they can devote to concerns which fall outside of the basic requirements of pastoral work. This limits their propensity to embrace or deal with political issues that touch the lives of people in their communities.

These findings, I will argue, offer somewhat sobering implications for those who wish to see local clergy undertake an active role in helping to improve the quality democracy for citizens at the grassroots. In particular, the analyses suggest that societal influences undermine the propensity of the clergy to play the part of civil society in the "functionalist" sense.² This does not mean that greater policy efforts to bring the clergy

² As I mentioned in Chapter 1, by "functionalist" I refer to the perspective which highlights the important supportive role that the organizations of civil society are supposed to perform in the consolidation and deepening of democracy.

to embrace a more civic or empowering role will necessarily fail. However, such efforts confront a larger set of influences which are relatively immutable to change. The prospects for a church-based civil society which actively works to improve local-level political life seem somewhat limited in this respect.

Outline

Chapter 4 is devoted to describing the basic institutional contexts in which Presbyterian and Catholic clergy operate. In this respect, the discussion deals only tangentially with the local clergy per se. Instead, the chapter examines the politics of the CCAP-Blantyre Synod and the Catholic Church at the institutional level. I trace the history of these churches as related to national politics and evaluate the political context within the institutions at the time the research was conducted. This offers a basic perspective on the larger institutional dynamics and orientations framing the behavior of the local clergy.

In Chapter 5, I engage the more specific task of assessing the character of clergy interventions into grassroots political life. Specifically, using data from my interviews with clergy, I examine the extent to which local ministers and priests undertake activities to address the socio-political needs of citizens in their communities. This is based largely on their answers to questions concerning three types of activities through which they can impact local-level political life: pastoral work, preaching, and their community activities. The results allow a relative categorization of clergy based on their respective levels of activism on behalf of local concerns.

Informed by these findings, Chapter 6 then undertakes the more critical task of analyzing the clergy's political behavior. I focus on the manner in which institutional,

religious, and social influences influence the extent of clergy efforts to address the needs and concerns of local citizens. The findings, as I have indicated, offer a sobering reminder that the hope for active clergy efforts to deepen democracy and empower local citizens may actually be undermined by the larger social context in which they are situated. Social influences on clergy outlooks and behaviors may actually hinder their propensity to embrace and work for local concerns as representatives of civil society.

CHAPTER 4

THE CCAP-BLANTYRE SYNOD AND CATHOLIC CHURCH AS POLITICAL ACTORS: REVIEWING THE INSTITUTIONAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This chapter describes the character of church political activities at the institutional level, providing the necessary backdrop for the systematic assessment of the behavior of local clergy in the chapters which follow. The focus is first on the political history of the CCAP-Blantyre Synod and the Catholic Church, both before and during Malawi's period of political transition. Thereafter, the discussion turns to the type of political roles which these two churches have embraced since the transition to multiparty politics.

As the reader will note, in undertaking this review of the churches' political role(s) I focus on a relatively broad array of their activities. Thus while much of my attention is on the churches' public postures towards and interactions with key political actors, I am equally concerned with other, less visible, aspects of their politics. For instance, I devote attention to the messages which the ecclesiastical leaders transmit to the faithful on a regular basis, assessing the issues which obtain primacy in the discourses emanating from these institutions. For example, have the churches routinely addressed social issues, or focused solely on pietistic concerns? In addition, I examine the priorities and programs that church leaders establish for ecclesiastical relations with society and the larger body of faithful. What, for example, has been considered "normal" pastoral work, providing sacraments or responding to issues in the community? As this project is

concerned with the churches' relationship to political life at the grassroots, attention to such issues is an absolute necessity. This is especially true in so far as such pastoral emphases have implications for the character of ecclesiastical interactions with average citizens.

Several points can be noted at the outset concerning the empirical record of these churches' political activities. First, although they served as progenitors of regime change in Malawi, their activities in these respects were quite anomalous with their previous history of support for the Banda regime and its authoritarian project. Moreover, although their visibility as actors on the national political stage has continued into to post-authoritarian era, there are limits in the extent of church efforts to address the substantive concerns of average citizens. This is particularly true when we consider the manner in which these churches relate to the larger body of faithful.

As this project is focused on the activities of the local church, I do not intend to offer a systematic analysis of these patterns in the behavior of the larger ecclesiastical institutions. This said, the theoretical framework applied to the study of the local clergy can offer some useful interpretive insights in this regard. Indeed, some important parallels can be drawn with my analytical arguments concerning the behavior of the local clergy. For instance, one reason for the churches' relative inaction on social and political affairs during the Banda years concerned the socio-political environment in which they were situated. The churches were dependent on the power elite to ensure both institutional (not to mention personal) survival and pursuit of basic ecclesiastical goals. Similarly, as I will argue in upcoming chapters, rank and file clergy in the post-

authoritarian context often find themselves in dependent relations with local elites. This in turn inhibits their propensity to speak out against local injustices or abuses of power.

More generally, the pattern of ecclesiastical activity in the post-authoritarian can be attributed to the “institutional” concerns and religious frameworks guiding church leaders. As to the former, basic interests in maintaining and enhancing organizational efficacy and integrity have informed the thrust of church activities. “Institution strengthening” endeavors obtain the predominant status in the programs and policies of these churches.³ Equally important, the salience of socially-oriented theological discourses or religious world views has been limited within these churches. The focus of “religious” interventions reflects an emphasis on sacramental, salvational, or faith-deepening imperatives.⁴ The end result of these dual influences is the relative downgrading of efforts to address the social and political concerns of average citizens. Other institutional priorities and pastoral emphases take the lions share of ecclesiastical energy.

Overview and Dynamics at Independence

Constituted of three different synods, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) today claims to represent 25 percent of the religious population of the country. The Nkhoma Synod and Livingstonia Synod, each the legacy of different missionary efforts,

³ See Bruneau (1974) and Kassimir (1998) for a discussion of how such “institutional” imperatives guide the nature of ecclesiastical interventions into public life.

⁴ In devoting attention to this issue I borrow from literature which highlights the importance of different theologies and religious visions in shaping church activities in society and with the faithful. See especially Levine (1981), Mainwaring (1986) and Williams (1991).

are found respectively in the central and northern regions of Malawi. The Blantyre Synod--whose clergy and congregations are a central focus of this study--is located in the southern part of the country. The Blantyre Synod currently claims about one million church members, spread out across 300 congregations.⁵ Nearly 100 ministers are active in the Synod.

The Synod finds its origins in the activities of Scottish missionaries in the 1870s. Coming to promote "Christianity and commerce" the missionaries established a mission church and industrial center in what is today the city of Blantyre. The mission sought to both promote social development and establish a solid Christian community in the country (Sindima 1992). To these ends, the mission devoted itself considerably to the education of local Africans. Initially, this involved training in basic skills. Later the mission established institutions for formal education, towards the end of "modernizing" the "native" along western lines.

From the outset, the Scottish missionaries sought to create a truly "African Church." African ministers were first ordained in 1911. By the mid-1950s a solid base of approximately twenty African ministers was in place (Sindima 1992). In 1957, the key church offices of Moderator and General Secretary were occupied by Malawians. Mission authority over the local church was removed in 1959. To this day, it should be added, the CCAP remains much more "Malawian" than the Catholic Church. Only one or two expatriates are active congregational ministers in the Blantyre Synod. Among the Catholics, expatriates constitute about 15 percent of the clergy.

⁵ These numbers are gleaned from Andrew Ross (1996:13).

Though the Scottish Presbyterians were fundamental to the establishment of colonial Malawi, the Blantyre Mission later came to be an important player in Malawi's nationalist struggle. On the one hand, this is evident in the fact that numerous leading figures in nationalist history received their formative education in Blantyre Mission stations. This included several participants in the Chilembwe uprising of 1915 (Shepperson and Price 1958: 203, 245). At other points, mission-educated church elders were active in the formation of Nyasaland's "native associations," which would later evolve into the Nyasaland African National Congress, the leading vehicle for nationalist agitation, and forerunner to the MCP. At the time of independence numerous ranking government officials were active members of the Blantyre Synod (Mfuka 1977).

In addition, Synod leaders were themselves active in challenging the colonial apparatus--both before and in the lead-up to independence. In 1958, for example, the Synod issued a widely read public statement opposing the federation of Nyasaland (Malawi) with Southern and Northern Rhodesia.⁶ The federation was largely perceived as a step back for the cause of Malawian nationalism. Later, Blantyre Synod moderator Jonathan Sangaya came to play a highly visible role in the movement against the federation. For example, Sangaya and other ministers frequently visited persons detained by the government during a period of widespread arrests in 1959 designed to halt nationalist agitation (Kenneth Ross 1996a). Many, if not all, of the detainees were members of the Nyasaland African National Congress (Andrew Ross 1996: 11).

⁶ See "Blantyre Synod Statement on the Present State of Unrest" (1958). In Kenneth Ross, ed. (1996).

The ties between the nationalist movement and the Synod encouraged close association between the church and the state in the period of independence. Sangaya, in fact, came to be regarded as a chaplain by Kamuzu Banda (Kenneth Ross 1996a). This in turn set the stage for church state-relations during the Banda era. Before turning to this issue, however, I briefly provide an overview of the Catholic Church and its history in Malawi.

Like the Presbyterians, the Catholic Church claims to represent approximately 25 percent of all Malawians.⁷ Seven dioceses make up the church. Priests, both expatriate and Malawian, number around 375.

A permanent Catholic presence in Malawi dates from around the turn of the century when two missions were established in the country; the first by the White Fathers in the central region, the second by Montfort fathers in the southern part of the country. From the outset, the Catholics were less concerned with creating a local church (in the institutional sense), than with increasing sheer numbers of Christian converts in the villages. Only three Malawians were ordained as priests prior to 1940. Thereafter, the African presence in the official offices of the church grew, albeit slowly. In 1957, the first Malawian bishop was consecrated; while a second was consecrated to the archdiocese in 1968. At the time of writing six of seven episcopal positions were held by Malawians. Today local priests constitute about 85 percent of all parish clergy.

⁷ The remainder of the population is made up of diverse religious affiliations. This includes a significant Muslim population (12-15 percent), as well as the presence other Christian traditions such as Anglicanism, Seventh Day Adventism, and more contemporary evangelical Protestantism.

The role of the Catholic Church in Malawi's early political development was quite different from that of the Blantyre Synod. Unlike the Presbyterians who devoted themselves as much to social modernization as to evangelization, the Catholics focused largely on the conversion of rural Malawians to Christianity (Wellor 1980: 102). One result of this was that Catholicism did not have the same kind of formative impact on early nationalists. Some indeed maintained that Catholicism--and the missionaries' de-emphasis on education or westernization--had helped to create a docile rural population, unwilling to challenge the colonial apparatus. No Catholics, for example, were involved in the above-mentioned Chilembwe uprising of 1915. Indeed, Chilembwe's lieutenants attacked the local Catholic station with aim of killing the Dutch priest in residence (see Linden 1974:196).⁸

As the colonial era came to a close then, the Catholic Church did not have close connections with the nationalist movement which would later evolve into the Malawi Congress Party. Moreover, just prior to independence in 1960, the Catholic hierarchy came into outright conflict with the MCP. This occurred after the archbishop offered advice to one lay Christian who sought to create a new political party to contest national elections. When the new party surfaced, Aleke Banda (a leading figure in the MCP and the current finance minister under the Muluzi government) viciously attacked the church in an article entitled, "To Hell with the Vatican Papal Empire." The issue eventually died

⁸ A second example of the Catholic Church's less than amicable relations with emerging nationalist sentiments in Malawi might be found in their conflict with the local "nyau" cults located in central Malawi. Condemned by the Catholic Church, *nyau* dancers came to be grassroots symbol of cultural resistance. Indeed, *nyau* dancers celebrated victoriously on the footsteps of a prominent parish church on the eve of independence (see Linden 1974).

after a series of exchanges in the press. In the months that followed, however, the hierarchy issued a pastoral letter entitled, “How to Build a Happy Nation.” The letter aimed primarily to establish guidelines for Christian participation in partisan politics, but also advised rulers, to “govern without injustice or severity, to rule their people kindly and paternally” (Chakanza 1995).

The Banda Era

Despite the different paths leading up to independence, the political roles of the Blantyre Synod and the Catholic Church evolved into relative similarity during the Banda era. Much of this was of course owed to the repressive climate. That the public postures and character of state-level church engagements were largely supportive of the Banda regime can be partly understood in this light. Equally important, especially in the early days of independence, a good relationship with the regime was no doubt viewed as an essential precondition to the churches carrying out their evangelizing mission in society. The Catholic Church’s run-in with the MCP leadership indicated the potential pitfalls which could confront the churches should they run afoul of the regime. Indeed, the later removal of the Jehova’s Witnesses from the country confirmed that amicable political relations with the regime were essential if church leaders wanted to preserve the vitality of both their religious communities and institutions in the country.

Beyond this, it needs to be remembered that the churches’ approaches to their work emphasized “traditional” ecclesiastical goals. Social concerns and the need to address the larger human condition surfaced only tangentially until the late 1980s in either the public or internal discourses of these churches. And as scholars and church

leaders have noted about the African church more generally, the absence of theologies calling for attention to socio-political issues also helps to explain the relative political quiescence of church leaders in the face of authoritarian regimes for thirty years (Ranger 1995:16 and Gifford 1993).

Relations between the Blantyre Synod and the Banda regime remained very close until the period of Malawi's democratic transition. Indeed, Synod leaders are today quite forthcoming about the fact that they served as "the state church."⁹ Banda was himself a Presbyterian and he would frequently worship in CCAP churches. In turn, Synod leaders were frequently found praying and participating at government functions and also served as private chaplains to the MCP inner circle (Kenneth Ross 1996). Public political statements by the church, unsurprisingly, offered praise for Banda and his numerous "accomplishments." The Synod also regularly sent Banda letters of support and loyalty.

Following the issuing of their 1961 pastoral letter, the Catholic Church's manifest political posture was also one of clear support for Banda. In public, Banda stressed the importance of the church to the social development of the nation and would join in important Catholic celebrations, such as consecrations of new bishops. The church, in turn, was quick to emphasize the indispensable nature of Kamuzu's rule. Shortly after his ordination in 1968, Archbishop James Chiona, for example, praised the progress of Malawi since independence as "a move towards progress and peace, a bridge between hostility and understanding, between insularity and cooperation."¹⁰ Consider as well the

⁹ Blantyre Synod Statement on the Transformation of Malawi (1993).

¹⁰ *Catholic Secretariat Newsletter* (1969).

joint statement of the CCAP and the Catholic Church at the celebration of the 10th anniversary of independence in 1974:

What has been achieved during this period in all fields is so unbelievable that it confounds even the most optimistic expectations of most of us and there is no doubt that all this achievement is due to the untiring efforts, dedicated, selfless, and responsible leadership of His Excellency, the Life President, Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda It is due to His Excellency's own dynamic leadership and the stable and peaceful conditions that leadership has created.¹¹

The tone rarely changed. As late as 1989, the Catholic periodical *Moni* celebrated Dr. Banda's rule, claiming that he had "created a political climate which allowed all people to of all races to live together harmoniously and without civil or foreign strife."¹²

In their messages to Christians, moreover, both of these churches rarely addressed temporal concerns which might afflict the faithful. Pastoral letters and public statements by the Catholic Bishops often exhorted Christians to be supportive of their church, i.e. increasing financial contributions and also encouraging children to join the priesthood and religious orders.¹³ Other public statements took an educational approach, instructing Christians on various aspects of church doctrine, or addressing social issues such as raising children or avoiding AIDS.¹⁴ The Blantyre Synod was little different in this

¹¹ "Joint Message from the Churches of Malawi on 10th Anniversary of Independence" (1974).

¹² *Moni* (1989).

¹³ See "70th Jubilee in Malawi: Bishop's Statement" (1971); "'Za Kuthandiza Mpingo' Pastoral Letter of Bishops of Malawi to All Christians" (1985); "Allow Your Children to Serve the Church Says Bishop Mkhori" (1981); "Letter of the Catholic Bishops to All Priests, Religious and Christians in Malawi" (1990).

¹⁴ See "Bishop's Pastoral Letter, 'Christian Unity and How to Achieve it'" (1968); "Episcopal Letter on Aids, 'Choose Life - Avoid Aids'" (1989); "'Raising Children,' Letter of the Catholic Bishops to all Christians in Malawi" (1987).

respect. Public statements focused on spiritual issues and the general welfare of the church.¹⁵

Much the same, programs and emphases within these churches were manifestly “a-political.” In cooperation with international religious bodies the Blantyre Synod sponsored a mission hospital. Moreover, together with the Ministry of Education, the Synod held responsibility for some primary and secondary schools in the country. Beyond this, internal documents and records of meetings indicate that the Synod was basically concerned with institutional development and quite ordinary issues such as training ministers and lay leaders, physical maintenance and expansion of church structures, and evangelization or religious education campaigns. An active youth program focused on the training youth in their faith; while a women’s center sponsored both the religious and educational activities for women.

As to the Catholic Church, programs and discourses similarly focused primarily on issues of institutional development and the religious formation of the faithful. In the mid-1980s, a “social development” department was established at the Catholic Secretariat, possibly reflecting greater attention to social concerns by the church. But “development” activities took place outside of the normal framework of parish life and tended to focus on traditional service (health or education) ministries, rather than empowerment or changing social conditions. Other notable developments involved enlarging the scope of lay activities in the church. This included the expansion of local church councils and lay organizations and the promotion of small Christian communities

¹⁵ Malawi National Archives, File number 168, contains the documentary history of the Blantyre Synod. Newsletters, meeting meetings, and correspondence from the 1960s to the 1990s are contained therein.

at the village level. Importantly, however, all of these developments were undertaken with the aim of rooting church structures and the faith more deeply in Malawian society.

While the church took this approach, it should be equally noted that the Catholic hierarchy was not immune from currents in Catholic theology which called for a greater church role in addressing socio-political concerns. However, the hierarchy was actively resistant to such suggestions. One informant indicated that as early as 1981, a number of foreign clergy sought to have a politically charged statement from the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) translated from French into English. The local episcopate refused. Even more telling, the Bishops actually thwarted one priest's efforts, undertaken from 1990-1991, to promote a "justice and peace" campaign in the country. The head of the Lay Apostolate Office in the Catholic Secretariat, Fr. Job Makarika, both called on the Bishops to speak on justice issues and attempted to set up "justice and peace commissions" from the national to the parish level. Makarika was unique among the clergy in having had the opportunity to attend church-sponsored conferences in other African countries where the "justice and peace" mission of the church was openly discussed. The record indicated that Makarika's experience of interacting with clergy outside of Malawi and also becoming more familiar with the emerging anti-authoritarian posture of African Catholic Church had an important formative impact on his proposals for what needed to occur in Malawi.¹⁶ His efforts to implement such changes within the church came to a halt, however, as they were labeled both "too subversive" and "too radical" by leading bishops. Sadly, Makarika died in

¹⁶ One notable turning point appears to have been a church-sponsored conference held in Nigeria in March of 1990.

December of 1991. Four months later, the Bishops spoke out on the political situation in the country.¹⁷

Churches as Agents of Change: 1992-1994

The emergence of the churches as active agents of democratic reform in the country took many by surprise. Their close alliances with the regime and relative silence prior to 1992 gave little cause to think that they would speak out against the single party system. In this section, I review both why the churches emerged as protagonists of democracy and how they served in this capacity.

Why the Rise of the Churches

The literature on churches and politics offers different perspectives on why churches emerge from relative quiescence to take active and prophetic roles against authoritarian regimes. As several of the insights from this body of work can guide our understanding of the rise of churches in Malawi, certain important themes should be noted.

Generally speaking, two broad emphases are found in the literature on church activism. The first emphasis directs attention to external influences on the national churches. Perhaps the most important among these is the larger political context in which churches are situated. Mainwaring and Wilde (1989) and Reilly (1986), both dealing with the Catholic Church in Latin America, draw attention to closures of political space and increases in repression as important progenitors of prophetic activities by churches (see also Borer 1993 and Williams 1991). Still others, drawing on the Eastern European

¹⁷ Catholic Secretariat Archives, Document number 371.

and African evidence, have emphasized that declines in regime legitimacy can bring churches into opposition postures (Johnston and Figa 1988; Joseph 1993).

An additionally important external factor concerns the role of the international Catholic Church. The political outspokenness of John Paul II, for example, is viewed by some as having been a decisive factor in inspiring national churches to challenge the abuses of authoritarian regimes (Boyle 1991; Huntington 1991). Others have drawn attention to larger doctrinal changes, such as those associated with the Second Vatican Council as a potential facilitator of church activism (Levine 1981; Williams 1991).

The second emphasis highlights the importance of internal decision-making. However, there are differences of opinion as to what motivates decisions within churches. One view devotes attention to the instrumental concerns of the church leadership. In this perspective church leaders are considered to be rational actors primarily motivated by concerns to enhance and preserve the status, integrity, and influence of their institution in society (see Bruneau 1974; Williams 1989). External factors obtain importance in so far as they shape the rational calculi of church leaders about which political posture to take.

An alternative view on internal decision-making stresses the salience of the religious variable within churches. Rather than see church leaders as motivated by essential rational aims, this view argues that such aims can themselves change with the emergence and appropriation of novel religious ideas. Theologies which call for prophetic activities by churches obtain primary causal significance in this respect. For this reason, attention to changes in religious discourses, such as the rise of liberation theology in Latin America or "contextual theology" in South Africa, is particularly

important to understanding church activism in those contexts (Mainwaring 1986; Borer 1993).

To be sure, most treatments of churches and politics blend attention to both internal decision-making and external influences. One cannot understand rational decisions outside of the broader socio-political context which sets the parameters for those decisions. Much the same, the emergence and resonance of prophetic religious ideas and theologies is related to the dynamics of the social environment. This said, there is considerable theoretical dissonance between those who emphasize rational motives and those who draw attention to religious inspirations.

My goal in this chapter is not to engage theoretical debates about the behavior of churches, but, again, simply to provide the context for the remainder of the study. Suffice it to say that when we consider the rise of Malawi's churches, similar external influences, both in terms of influences from the political context and the larger international church, appear to have played an important role in their prophetic emergence. As to internal decision-making, while we cannot wholly discount the role religious inspirations, there is little evidence to indicate that novel theological ideas motivated the church leaders to challenge the Banda regime. The review which follows gives primary attention to the external influences pressuring church leaders to act.

As regards the Catholic Church, one needs to see the prophetic writing and dissemination of the March 1992 pastoral letter as the product both of the changes in broader environment in which the church was situated in the early 1990s and of more specific pressures on the Catholic leadership. While the former created a fertile context

for the rise of the church, the latter actually pushed the hierarchy down the path of political opposition.

We begin with changes in the broader political environment. By the early 1990s, Bishops in several countries, notably Kenya and Zambia, had undertaken novel activities challenging autocrats and supporting "multipartyism." Thus there were clear precedents for prophetic activities by the Catholic Church in neighboring countries. Beyond this, the political situation in Malawi was becoming increasingly uncertain at this time. Banda, then aged in his early 90s, would surely pass away in the near future. It was widely perceived that intense conflict would result from the moment of his death as rival factions struggled for state leadership. The issues confronting Malawi politically in the early 1990s were not only the excesses of authoritarianism, but also the imminent onset of instability. In this context, the need for action was perhaps perceived to be greater than at other times during Malawi's history.

As to the more immediate pressures on Malawi's Catholic Bishops, three in particular should be noted. First, the universal Catholic Church, most clearly the Vatican, had put pressure on the Bishops to speak out on the social situation in the country. During his papal visit to Malawi in 1989, Pope John Paul II had questioned the episcopate's continued silence (Ross 1995a). The pressures from the universal Catholic Church were also realized in the presence of foreign clergy in the country--embodied most clearly in two expatriates who were members of the Episcopal Conference, Monsignor John Roche (a White Father) and Bishop A. Assolari (a Montfort). In private conversations, leading members of their respective religious orders claimed that the expatriate Bishops were primary advocates for the March 1992 pastoral letter--this

especially in relation to certain older members of the hierarchy who resisted such proposals.

Second, local clergy also put pressure on the hierarchy to take a prophetic stance in opposition to the regime and its excesses. I have already detailed above how Fr. Job Makarika had specifically called on the Bishops to speak out. In addition, several other diocesan clergy, some (not all) of whom were associated with Makarika, indicated that there had been clear and specific messages sent to the Bishops by rank and file priests. In this respect, the need for the Bishops to maintain credibility with the local clergy in some ways hinged on their speaking out against Banda.

Finally, the Bishops likely were concerned with the larger legitimacy of the institution in the face of the evolving domestic situation and the trends in the region. Too close an association with a repressive government, as well as inaction in an increasingly uncertain political climate, could leave the church very open to criticism in the future, even undermining its essential religious mission. Indeed, the church had already taken criticism for its silence on political affairs. In the aftermath of several high-level political murders in the early 1980s, local clergy were privately questioned by parishioners (Kenneth Ross 1996a). In addition, a letter was tacked to the door of the Zomba Cathedral criticized the silence of the Bishops on the matter.¹⁸ In all likelihood, the Bishops had such issues of their own legitimacy within society on the mind as they pondered their decision to speak out.

The Presbyterian action of June 1992 was informed by similar environmental changes associated with the unfolding political situation in the country and the role of

¹⁸ Interview notes, August 1993.

churches in democratization processes in other parts of the region. There were also immediate pressures on the leadership of the Blantyre Synod. Once the Catholic Church spoke, the Blantyre Synod found itself with the choice of opting with the regime or aligning itself with the forces for change. The latter constituted most of civil society in Malawi, as well as an array of international actors, including the Church of Scotland and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The latter were later cosigners of the CCAP letter calling for political change in the country. In addition, some clergy--both foreign and local--began to put pressure on the Synod to speak out. Several indeed went so far as to condemn the Banda regime independently.¹⁹ Thus, like the Catholic Bishops, the CCAP leadership had pressure from both below and outside to call for political change. Finally, it needs to be considered that the Synod leadership was similarly exhausted with Banda's rule and saw the need for change in the country. The Catholic action opened the door for them to voice their own opposition to Banda.

How the Churches Worked for Change

The churches' role in the process of political change involved much more than simply "getting the ball rolling" with their respective statements of opposition to the Banda regime. Even as other actors in political and civil society became involved, the churches' activities remained central to Malawi's transition.

¹⁹ Particularly notable were the statements of Rev. Robert Rasmussen, an expatriate minister active at the Blantyre Synod administrative offices during this time, who during an April 1992 sermon at St. Michael's and All Angels in Blantyre claimed that the Catholic Bishops had spoken the truth.

The CCAP statement on the need for political reform called on the Banda regime to take several steps to begin a process of transition. As the regime wavered in its response, it became apparent to CCAP leaders that further action would be needed to pressure the government. To this end, the leaders of the Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods organized other civic and religious groups into a single body to press the government on political change. The result was the formation of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in August of 1992. In addition to the Blantyre Synod and Catholic Church, PAC's membership included the Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, and Evangelical Churches, as well as the Malawi Law Society and the Muslim Association. At later points, other mass-based political organizations joined PAC.

PAC's initial role was to serve as a liaison between the forces for change in the country and the Banda regime. Responding to internal and external pressures, Banda announced in October of 1992 that a referendum should be held on the question of multi-party rule. Thereafter, PAC began a series of meetings with Banda's organization, the Presidential Commission on Dialogue (PCD), the aim of which was to work out the details for the referendum process. The role of PAC in this sense was crucial. Procedures for voter registration, balloting, and monitoring the process were hotly contested. In this sense PAC served as the key civil society organ to work out the "rules" of the transition process.

PAC served other critical roles as well. In public statements, for example, the organization brought attention to the harassment and detention of multi-party advocates. PAC also helped to monitor voting during the referendum of June 1993. In cooperation

with international donors, representatives of PAC's member organizations were present in every voting precinct and monitored the delivery of votes to counting stations.

The role of the CCAP and Catholic Church extended beyond the PAC, moreover, as both churches independently undertook efforts in support of the transition. The Blantyre Synod issued several public statements promoting the necessity of political change in the country and maintaining that the church would be in the vanguard in bringing about those changes.²⁰ In addition, several CCAP clergy independently fomented support for the movement to multi-partyism in their sermons and other spoken interchanges with the faithful.²¹ The Catholics were equally active, though perhaps in a less provocative manner. Their efforts appeared to be more directed at educating the populace about the possibilities for change through the national referendum. For example, the Catholics issued a second Pastoral Letter in March of 1993, entitled "Choosing Our Future." The letter, read in every parish, addressed issues such as "What is a Referendum?," "The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Single Party System", and "The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Multi-Party System."

The churches' activism continued in the period after the referendum of June 1993 and leading up to general elections of May 1994. As to PAC, their interventions at this time involved three different thrusts. First, PAC continued to publicly pressure the government on the reform process. Indeed, in the initial wake of the referendum results, they called on Banda to resign and hand over power to a transitional government. Later

²⁰ See "CCAP Statement on the role of the Church in the Transformation of Malawi" (1993); and statements by Synod leadership quoted in "CCAP Synod takes the Plunge" (1993).

²¹ Interview, August 3, 1993.

demands concerned the delinking of certain organizations from the government and the MCP. Secondly, PAC continued to negotiate with the PCD on details of the transition process. One of the more important outcomes of this process was the establishment of the National Executive Council, a body designed to allow the political parties decide the rules of the electoral game. Finally, with the assistance and active participation of donors, PAC implemented a widespread program to educate and animate society prior to the general election. This included district level workshops and mass rallies designed to instruct citizens on voting procedures.

The churches also acted independent of PAC in the post-referendum period. In March of 1994, for instance, the Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral letter which both endorsed the democratic process and attempted to educate citizens on their role in that process.²² Public statements by the Blantyre Synod addressed similar themes, albeit less systematically.²³

In sum, both the Blantyre Synod and the Catholic Church were key players in Malawi's process of transition. It should be added, moreover, that local clergy were part and parcel of this process--providing local-level challenges to the single party system, serving as representatives of democratic pressure groups, and carrying out efforts to provide civic and democratic education to Malawi's citizens prior to the general election of 1994.

²² "'Building Our Future,' Pastoral Letter from the Catholic Bishops of Malawi to Their Faithful" (March 1994).

²³ "Mipingo iuze aKhrisitu za Chisankho" (1994)..

The Blantyre Synod and Catholic Church in the Multi-party Era

As observers of the Catholic Church in Latin America have noted, transitions from an authoritarian political context to a more open liberalized environment can present serious dilemmas for religious institutions. Particularly for those churches which took active and prophetic postures in efforts to democratize the state, expectations may run high among both rank and file clergy and elements of society that the churches will continue to engage the political realm in an pursuit of progressive aims. For church leaders, however, post-authoritarian contexts often serve as cause for withdrawing from, or at least altering, political activism. Especially for those leaders with relatively conventional understandings of their mission, such continued engagements may be seen to detract from the basic evangelizing and salvational goals of the institution. The end of dictatorship thus allows the church to return to its more basic mission and avoid the risks of manifest political involvement. Leaders of the larger institution will recognize that the church can no longer take political sides as it did in the period when the primary lines of conflict were between state and civil society. Association with partisan politics can threaten the universal appeal of the church, a sine qua non for realization of religious goals (Williams 1991, Stewart-Gambino 1992b, Meacham 1994).

The dawning of multi-party politics with the election of Bakili Muluzi in May of 1994 ushered in a new context for the churches, presenting dilemmas as to which paths to follow in their political and pastoral engagements. As the following review makes clear, while the Blantyre Synod and the Catholic Church remain actively supportive of “democracy,” their efforts to address the substantive temporal concerns of citizens has been fairly limited. The churches have shown a propensity to continue to visibly engage

and address national political affairs. Most notably this has involved playing a “watchdog” role vis a vis the behavior of political elites. It has also entailed contributions to the national discourse on public affairs. At deeper levels, however, the record suggests that the churches are less concerned with improving the quality of democracy at or for the grassroots. Their messages toward the faithful and their internal emphases give limited attention to the temporal concerns of the average citizen.

It bears noting moreover that certain patterns of church political behavior in Malawi bear resemblance to those of the Catholic Church in post-transition Latin America. Churches which were active in efforts against authoritarian regimes in many respects retreated from progressive or “people-centered” politics in the wake of democratic reforms. As Bruneau and Hewitt (1992) detail, although long-heralded as one of the more progressive churches in the world, the Brazilian Church clearly shifted to an “elite-centered” posture after the departure of the military regime; this at the expense of more “poor-oriented” strategies. The penchant among Malawi’s churches to focus on elite level politics has been similarly apparent since May of 1994. Moreover, as many have noted, the space and opportunity for progressive pastoral work declined with shifts from authoritarian rule in Latin America (Bruneau and Hewitt 1992; Stewart-Gambino 1992b). Church leaders in Malawi have displayed similar favor for more traditional emphases in clerical pastoral engagements with the faithful.²⁴

²⁴ Although, to be sure, such progressive agenda never carried anywhere near the same salience as it did in the Latin American contexts.

The Public Posture of the Churches: A New Face?

Shortly after the ascension of Bakili Muluzi and the UDF to national leadership, the leaders of the Blantyre Synod and the Catholic Church were quick to indicate that they would continue to play an active role in the politics of the country.²⁵ One of the clearest signs of this was the reinvigoration of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC). Through the organization, the churches and other civic groups have collectively spoken on national affairs and undertaken activities in support of "democracy."

Public statements made by PAC have been one of the more visible manifestations of the active public role which the churches embraced. The record of church interventions into politics is quite notable in this respect. At a PAC meeting in November of 1994, for instance, church leaders raised concerns about the deterioration of the economic and security situation in the country.²⁶ At a subsequent meeting, PAC leaders called upon President Muluzi to very carefully review the economic conditions being imposed on Malawi by the IMF and World Bank "to insure that they are in the interests of the common man."²⁷ At later points, PAC employed more formal statements to national political actors. In August 1995, the PAC leadership issued an open letter to the President, Cabinet, and Civil Servants Trade Union. The letter was particularly pointed in its critique of government spending priorities in the wake of donor recommendations.

²⁵ *The Weekly Chronicle*, Aug 8 - 14 1994, carries a statement by leading Synod figure Misanjo Kansilanga to that effect; see also "Statement by the Episcopal Conference of Malawi," (1995).

²⁶ Report on the PAC "Church Leaders Meeting" held in Mzuzu, November 1994. Information provided courtesy of the PAC Secretariat, Lilongwe.

²⁷ *The Nation*, 28 March 1995.

(T)he resistance to World Bank recommendations that the size of the cabinet be reduced leaves us with the perception that by choosing to stand firm on this issue, rather than on fertilizer subsidies for example, Ministers are more important than the rest of the citizens.²⁸

Thereafter, PAC took on the issue of mercantile, partisan activities of the political elite.

A February 1996 statement challenged “unprincipled and irresponsible” behavior characterizing the political leadership (government and opposition). “Instead of seeing our leaders focus their energy on developing Malawi, we are forced to watch them battle for personal gain.”²⁹ PAC leaders complemented the statement with personal visits to the party leaders. As partisan bickering continued, PAC spoke again, specifically addressing the immature conduct of parliament members, and, more importantly, a legislative standstill engendered by the break-up of the governing coalition and the opposition’s boycotting of Parliament.³⁰

Beyond this, PAC also undertook a mediatory role among various political interests, sponsoring a series of “round table conferences” at the national and regional levels. Here, members of all political parties, government officials, and representatives of civil society came together to address matters of common concern such as transparency, political tolerance and reconciliation.³¹ Finally, PAC also embarked on a nation-wide

²⁸ “An Open Letter from the PAC Executive to the State President, Members of Cabinet, and Leaders of the Civil Servants Trade Union” (August 24, 1995).

²⁹ “A Call for Political Maturity from the PAC Executive Committee” (February 6, 1996).

³⁰ “Statement by the PAC Executive on the Current Situation in Parliament” (July 2, 1996). A PAC statement of December 3, 1996 also criticized the parties for fomenting regional tensions and disrupting the conduct of by-elections.

³¹ *PAC Newsletter* (September 1996).

civic education program designed to encourage participation, civic awareness, and the development of viable structures of governance at local levels. Importantly, the content of the program addressed pertinent issues such as the abuse of power by local authorities and community organization for political action, along with more abstract and legalistic concerns such as “the meaning of democracy” or “the role of local government.”³²

Outside of their activities through PAC, both the Blantyre Synod and the Catholic Church also spoke out independently on issues of national concern. Leaders of Blantyre Synod of the CCAP, for example, used the 1995 National Service of Worship as a forum to question the practices of “unproductive” government officials and the increasing evidence of corruption in the public sector. At later points, the General Secretary of the Synod was one of the few church leaders in the country to independently challenge the government and IMF-sponsored structural adjustment program. The Catholic Church has also taken outspoken stances on public affairs. The clearest example is witnessed in the issuing of a Pastoral Letter in September of 1996, wherein the Episcopal Conference of Malawi targeted the issues of corruption in the public sector and challenged social behaviors which abused Malawi’s new freedoms.³³

Both the activities of the PAC and the churches’ independent public interventions suggest that they have embraced an active posture towards the conduct of national political affairs in Malawi. Indeed, the evidence indicates that a posture of silent acquiescence reminiscent of the Banda era is no longer viewed as either prudent or proper

³² Public Affairs Committee (1996).

³³ See “‘Walking Together Towards the Year 2000,’ Letter from the Episcopal Conference of Malawi to the Catholic Faithful” (14 September 1996).

by the churches. This said, there are several limitations to the churches emerging public role which should be noted.

In the first place, the churches' public discourse continued to be of a "watchdog" or reactive character and was itself limited in the types of issues it addresses. While the churches addressed issues such as government excesses and corruption, they rarely spoke out on specific matters concerning abuses of government power. For instance, in May and June of 1995 government MPs allegedly received 50,000 Kwacha (\$US 7,000) each out of the Presidential Poverty Alleviation Fund, to use at their own discretion in their constituencies. The print media devoted considerable scrutiny to the issue, claiming that the money was clearly a payoff to MPs from the ruling party. Yet the churches remained silent, even though they were repeatedly asked by the President to participate in the poverty alleviation program.³⁴ Church comments at the July 5, 1996 National Celebration of Republican Status are also instructive. At the celebration, a collective statement by the churches addressed the issue of poverty, but did so by castigating the "spirit of laziness in society" which was retarding Malawi's development. The comments came only days after MPs called for luxurious pay and allowance raises to augment their living conditions.³⁵

In addition, church statements on politics, especially through PAC, focused largely on "high" political issues, such as the behavior of parties or government priorities. In this respect, the churches targeted issues immediately relevant to only one theater of

³⁴ Malawi Broadcasting Company News Bulletins April 1 1995, May 13 1995, and August 15 1995

³⁵ *The Nation*, 4 July 1996.

political life in the country--the circles of power wherein political elites vie and contest for advantage and privilege. In many ways, this arena of political machinations is both inaccessible and far removed from the immediate concerns of the common person. Other issues, such as the routine neglect of the grassroots by the political elite remained outside of the scope of PAC pronouncements. A commentary in the leading national newspaper made the following point about PAC:

The small political differences have no impact on people's daily lives, whereas failure to improve their well-being is truly a matter of grave concern..... Those priests, pastors, and God-fearing men in that committee have no sense of sympathy for the suffering masses.³⁶

Finally, it needs to be recalled that to this day PAC remains relatively peripheral to the routine practices of the churches. The leaders of the organization meet approximately once every six months. Most PAC programs are sponsored by donors who in turn provide financial stipends to civic and church representatives who carry out the organizations activities. Civic education and round table mediation efforts remain outside the framework of normal and routine "church" activities--that is, not integral to their work and mission. In this respect, the activities of the PAC have few implications for the larger character of ecclesiastical relations with society.

Programmatic and Discursive Emphases: Continuities in the Churches' Politics

The limits to the emerging political role of the churches is equally apparent when we examine the more "pastoral" dimensions of their politics. In this respect, we turn to the character of the churches' engagements with the larger body of faithful. On one

³⁶ "PAC: An Irrelevant Body" (1996).

hand, some changes within these institutions suggest a growing commitment to addressing socio-political needs in society. More generally, however, the larger programmatic and discursive emphases of the churches indicate that the actual substance of ecclesiastical engagements with society and the faithful remains very much as it was prior to the political transition.

The most notable internal changes pertain to the new salience of “justice and peace” or “human rights” concerns within these churches. For the Catholic Church, this attention to “justice and peace” obtains some inspiration from the Synod of African Bishops (1994), which promulgated the need for greater ecclesiastical concern with such issues. In 1994, the Catholic Secretariat established a Justice and Peace Desk which, as of 1996, received departmental status. Moreover, the Desk has been active, especially as secretariat teams have conducted diocesan-level workshops on Justice and Peace issues. In addition, one diocese has undertaken an extensive training effort which seeks to establish and animate Justice and Peace Commissions in each and every parish.

The pattern is very similar within the Blantyre Synod. The administration rhetorically has embraced “Human Rights” as an area of concern. At the time of writing, three donor-sponsored human rights conferences had been held for the Presbyterian ministers and lay leaders. Moreover, a Church and Society Desk was established for the Synod.

Despite these notable developments, there are nonetheless limitations to the churches’ efforts on these fronts. Within the Catholic Church, the Justice and Peace agenda has yet to penetrate very far beyond administrative offices. Of six Catholic Dioceses visited in the country, only three were found to have working Justice and Peace

Commissions.³⁷ Of these three, only one could be said to be truly active.³⁸ Much the same rings true of the Blantyre Synod. Although the leaders of the human rights conferences called for the establishment of human rights committees in every presbytery, none had taken such measures by the time of writing. As to the Church and Society Desk, it was unfortunately designated to be staffed and directed by the Blantyre Synod Projects Office, a largely expatriate run organization with little routine contact with the ministers and congregations of the Synod.

Beyond this, the emphasis on addressing social issues remains very low within the larger universe of the churches' priorities. As a whole, the style and structure of church efforts reflects the persistence of the two influences previously mentioned. The first is a basic concern with preserving and enhancing the institutional presence of the Church in society. The second is an understanding of mission which places primary emphasis on salvational, pietistic, and moral issues. As a result, ecclesiastical efforts to empower local citizens or raise issues pertinent to their situation are relatively few and far between.

Consider the situation in the Catholic Church. A review of homilies and routine pastoral messages of bishops to the faithful reveals that primary attention is devoted to discrete sets of issues. These include: the need for Christians to support the church in finances and evangelization efforts, the moral behavior of Christians, especially drunkenness and adultery; and the need for Christians, religious, and priests to be devoted

³⁷ Diocesan and parish visits were conducted between February and November of 1996.

³⁸ Data collected through June 1996. Changes may have occurred since then.

to their spiritual life.³⁹ In this respect, the discursive emphases in the church in the post-authoritarian context are quite similar to that of the Banda era.

Interviews conducted in five dioceses of the Catholic Church are also instructive. Two or three representatives within the diocese were asked to describe the top priorities of the bishop. The answers are listed below:

Table 4-1: Top Priorities of the Bishops

<u>Answer</u>	<u>How often mentioned</u>	<u>Mentioned in # of Dioceses</u>
1. Financial Self Sufficiency	6	4
2. Formation	5	3
3. Church Development	4	2
4. Administrative Accountability	3	2
5. Small Christian Communities	2	2
6. Education	2	2
7. African Synod	2	2
8. Care of Orphans	2	1
9. Evangelization	2	1
10 Administration of Sacraments	1	1
11. Justice and Peace	1	1

As can be seen, conventional issues take the lion's share of attention.

The evidence is quite similar for the Blantyre Synod. Synod level meetings have been consumed with discussions of financial matters as well as the internal conflicts pertaining to the emergence of a "born-again" faction within the Synod. Presbyteries have focused on development of the physical infrastructure and evangelization campaigns.

³⁹ See "Oyendetsa Mpingo Ndani?" (1996); "Nthawi Yakwana" (1996); "St Paul Ikwanitsa Zaka Khumi" (1996); "Khalani Odzipereka" (1996); "Gwirani nchito mwa chikondi" (1996); "Love is the Ladder to Heaven -Bishop" (1996); "Akhristu akhale nyale"(1996); "Tumikirani Mulungu m'choonadi" (1996); "Ambuye Assolari Alankhula ndi Achinyamata,"(1995); "Adzodza Ansembe Asanu ndi Awiri" (1996).

This is not to say that there is no action on social affairs by church leaders.

Various Catholic Bishops and the leaders of the Blantyre Synod have for instance promoted public awareness on AIDS. Similarly, it is true that the behavior of the youth receive considerable attention as church leaders visit schools and youth programs in their respective areas. However, messages on these issues tend to stress the need for greater commitment to Christian values and/or improvements in personal behavior

In short, while there are some notable developments in these churches, basic internal discourses and dynamics do not indicate that they have reevaluated their role in society. Indeed, in this respect, there is remarkable similarity in the manner in which the churches engaged the faithful and understood their mission during the Banda years.

Movements for Change?

One of the more notable developments in the Catholic Church is the emergence of an alternative voice on the role of the church in society. Elsewhere I have referred to this as the emergence of a “progressive” element in the church (VonDoepp 1998). In addition to practicing higher levels of social activism on an extensive array of issues, such progressives are attempting to promote greater participation and the empowerment of the faithful through the church. Importantly, this progressive element is disproportionately made up of expatriate clergy.

The efforts of several Montfort Fathers provide perhaps the clearest example of the movement. Their most visible contribution to Malawi’s political life is *The Lamp*, a national non-partisan news magazine launched in late 1995 and devoted to raising issues which might otherwise fail to be discussed--the politics of land, women’s rights, or the

distribution of structural adjustment burdens. Of equal importance, however, are the pastoral initiatives sponsored by the Montforts who offer parish-level programs across the country to help establish and animate small Christian communities (SCCs)--a pastoral initiative which seeks to refocus the practice and structure of religious life to small village-based organizations. Central to their program is an effort to link religious practices with social and political issues: youth are encouraged to take active leadership roles; intensive discussions occur about the responsibilities of those in positions of authority; and Christians are instructed that the small Christian communities should foster development and justice in their communities.

Other clergy are also active in efforts to refocus the content of church-faithful relations in a more socially transformative direction. For instance, certain clergy have spearheaded the development of national and diocesan level "Training for Transformation" teams. Such teams hold workshops with clergy and Christians around the country--seeking to increase lay participation and responsibility. Although social issues do not necessarily receive primacy, their program is fundamentally political in its intent. As one of the chief proponents put it, "it takes people seriously and encourages the participation of all. It seeks to empower people by raising critical awareness. It is democracy in practice."⁴⁰ Discussions focus on issues such as the need for dialogue in decision making and the necessary obligation of leadership to listen.

Whether these kinds of alternative viewpoints can shape the broader content of ecclesiastical practices remains an open question. That much, though not all, of the impetus on these issues comes from expatriate clergy, leaves the progressive wing with a

⁴⁰ Jos Kuppens (1995).

decidedly “foreign” image. That the Bishops appear to have different ideas about the role of the church in the world may work against their impact. At this point, their presence is noted as it could serve as a potential progenitor of more active efforts by Catholic clergy to address the political needs of citizens in their communities.

By Way of Conclusion: Returning to the Local Clergy

In a later chapter, I will examine how more specific institutional factors shape the nature of clergy political behavior at the local level. At this point, it does us well to simply note the general patterns in these churches in so far as they have suggestive implications for the activities of the clergy at the local level.

On one hand, certain aspects of the larger institutional contexts can be seen as encouraging of clergy efforts to embrace and work for local-level political concerns. For one, there is a clear precedent for prophetic and pro-democratic clerical activities in the political world. This is in the first place witnessed in the leading role which the Catholic Church and Blantyre Synod undertook during Malawi’s period of political reform (1992-1994). As I mentioned, local clergy were part and parcel of this effort. Moreover, in the multi-party era, the churches have continued to play a visible role in national level politics, thus providing a model of activity to rank and file clergy.

Second, certain developments within these churches are supportive of clerical interventions on behalf of equality, justice, and human rights. In both the Blantyre Synod and the Catholic Church, structures and programs have been put in place to promote both human rights and “justice and peace” agendas. Moreover, a small portion of progressive clergy is very visible and outspoken within Catholic circles.

On the other hand, there are equally compelling reasons to suggest that the institutional context is not supportive of clergy activity on behalf of local concerns. In particular, the larger tenor and priorities vocalized from the top of these institutions remain very much anchored on conventional or “traditional” themes. There are very few efforts from the ecclesiastical leaders to redirect clergy roles towards more socially-oriented objectives. Themes of promoting salvation, insuring institutional efficacy, and intensifying the religiosity of the faithful obtain pride of place in the internal discourses of these churches. Finally, the “social” mission of the church is something which is promoted disproportionately by foreign actors.

The question we then turn to concerns the character of the local clergy interventions into political life. Specifically, to what extent do they undertake actions which can increase the efficacy or awareness of local citizens or encourage greater state responsiveness to local needs? The following chapter is devoted to providing an answer to this question.

CHAPTER 5
THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CLERGY
TO LOCAL POLITICS: AN ASSESSMENT AND OVERVIEW

Among the actors who make up civil society, rank and file clergy are particularly well placed to exert positive impacts on local political life. In their capacities as both pastoral agents and prominent community actors, they have opportunities to influence such important aspects of grassroots politics as the political attitudes and activities of the faithful and the character of state-society interactions in their immediate surroundings (Stewart-Gambino 1992a; Levine 1992; Calhoun Brown 1996). In this respect, their activities can help to improve the quality of democracy at the grassroots-- both facilitating the responsiveness of government to local communities and empowering citizens with a greater role in the political process

The question which I seek to answer in this chapter concerns the extent to which clergy from the Blantyre Synod and the Catholic Church undertake activities which can improve political conditions in their communities. As mentioned, this involves their engaging in discrete practices towards the dual ends of: (a) enhancing the political awareness and efficacy of local citizens, and (b) increasing state responsiveness to local needs. Importantly, I do not maintain that these are necessarily the outcomes of clergy activities. The goal of the research is to assess the extent to which the clergy engage in distinct types of behaviors which *can* but not necessarily *do* facilitate such outcomes.

While the research in this chapter is purely descriptive, the assessment of clergy behavior is nonetheless central to the larger task of analyzing the character of churches as part of civil society. In particular, the research in this chapter presents two key issues for subsequent analysis. On the one hand, some clergy are more active than others in addressing the political needs of citizens in their communities. This brings us to consider and analyze the variables which motivate or facilitate local clergy activism. On the other, there are more general limits to the clergy's activities in these regards. This requires us to explore the constraints on their propensity to embrace and work for grassroots concerns.

Reviewing the Clergy's Political Activities

My assessment of the clergy's political activities draws primarily, but not wholly, from results of interviews with the previously described sample of forty-seven Presbyterian ministers and Catholic priests. These clergy were asked specific questions to evaluate the extent to which they actively attempted to address political concerns and issues in their communities. Importantly, in describing the data from these interviews, I do not propose to offer concrete generalizable statements as to the character of political activities of all the clergy associated with these religious bodies. The small size of the sample as well as the problematic nature of sampling procedures precludes us so doing. This said, there is little reason to suspect that the descriptive findings about these forty seven clergy do not apply to the larger body of clergy from the Blantyre Synod and Catholic Church. The data about these forty-seven clergy no doubt highlight behavior patterns which bespeak the larger character of clergy political activities at the local level.

Moreover, it needs to be recalled that this assessment of the clergy's behavior is not an end in and of itself. Instead, it serves as a means towards the more fundamental goal of analyzing the factors that shape clergy behavior at the local level. As will be seen, the data from the interviews offer possibilities for basic statistical analyses towards this end. Of equal importance, the empirical depiction of the clergy's political activities alerts us to important behavior patterns which can be analyzed by using qualitative and observational data.

Again, the key issue concerns the extent to which the clergy engage distinct forms of behavior which can improve the quality of democracy in their grassroots communities. Alternatively this can be described as the extent to which they actively seek to address local-level political concerns and issues. In order to evaluate this, the forty-seven ministers and priests were asked about three types of activities through which they can impact local political life. These are pastoral work, preaching, and their community role. In the sections which follow, I first provide a general overview of the clergy's responses to my queries and then pinpoint the proportions of clergy who indicated efforts to work for local concerns through each these activities. This provides an initial depiction of the character of the clergy's political activities. Thereafter, I use the clergy's responses to rank and compare them in terms of their overall levels of local activism. These rankings are used in Chapter 6 to systematically analyze the influences on clergy behavior.

Pastoral Work: An Overview

We begin with the assessment of the clergy's pastoral work, defined as the routine activities which they undertake as part of their ministry. The research was concerned

with the extent to which the clergy incorporated into their own ministerial efforts activities which were designed to address the political or social needs of the faithful.

The theoretical basis for evaluating this area of activity emerges from studies which indicate that the character of clerical pastoral work can have implications for the manner in which the faithful think about and engage the political world. Many of these insights are found in research on the Catholic Church in Latin America. Scott Mainwaring's (1986) work on the Catholic Church in Brazil, for example, describes how the practices of "progressive" clergy had distinct impacts on political life in grassroots communities. In particular, pastoral efforts designed to encourage empowerment and the development of social movements had the effect of increasing levels of citizen participation and organization at the grassroots (see especially 196-199). A more elaborate statement on these processes is offered by Daniel Levine (1992). In his view, novel pastoral practices by clergy in Latin America have been the source of important changes in the political culture and behavior of average citizens. Similar to Mainwaring, he focuses on the importance of clerical efforts to undo habits of submissiveness, bring attention to social concerns, and encourage organization to address community problems. By undertaking such practices in their routine pastoral engagements, clergy helped to foster changes in how local actors related to larger political structures and processes (see also Mainwaring and Levine 1989).

In order to assess the character of the clergy's pastoral activities, two questions were asked of the interviewees: 'What are the biggest priorities in your pastoral work right now?' and "What are the key concerns to which you are devoting attention?" In responding to the questions, the clergy would normally mention one to four priorities or

concerns. This yielded a total of 108 responses which were then placed into one of nine categories. The chart below reviews how often each priority or concern was mentioned.

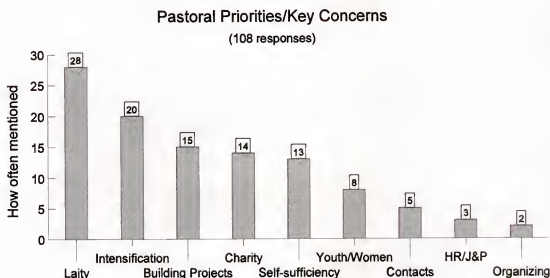


Figure 5-1: Pastoral Priorities and Key Concerns of Local Clergy Interviewed

Laity:	Lay organizations or training the laity
Intensification:	Intensifying the faith or religious knowledge of the Christians
Building Projects:	Building or improving physical structures
Charity:	Charity, providing education, or development projects (schools, hospitals)
Self-sufficiency:	Promoting parish self-sufficiency
Youth/Women:	Encouraging the role of youth or women in the church
Contacts:	Increasing contacts and visits with the Christians
HR/J&P:	Localizing human rights or justice and peace concerns
Organizing:	Mobilizing and organizing citizens for social/developmental ends

The chart indicates that relatively conventional or “traditional” concerns take the bulk of clergy attention in their pastoral work. This includes matters such as training the laity, church building projects, or religious intensification efforts. Activities like development projects or enhancing youth and women’s participation also receive attention. However,

the "political" content of such emphases should not be overstated. Working on development projects usually involved clergy efforts to bring a school or, less frequently, a health facility to their immediate area--this in keeping with traditional emphases on service ministries. Attention to youth and women's participation generally entailed encouraging lay organizations devoted to serving the churches.

This said, two practices mentioned by the clergy had the manifest potential to enhance local-level political conditions, particularly in so far as they were directed towards increasing the awareness, efficacy, and organization of local citizens. The first were specific attempts to incorporate and advance the justice and peace (in the Catholic case) or human rights (in the Presbyterian case) agendas which obtain currency in the larger institutional discourses of these churches. This involved undertaking measures such as establishing a local commission for justice and peace or simply meeting with the laity to discuss human rights issues. The second was witnessed in a more general emphasis by the clergy on mobilizing and organizing local citizens for development ends. The latter two columns in the chart represent how often these two practices were mentioned as priorities by the clergy. As can be seen, promoting human rights concerns or mobilizing/organizing for development were mentioned quite infrequently the interviews.

In short, it appears that conventional practices and emphases take up the vast share of clergy pastoral efforts. Novel ministerial activities which have the potential to increase citizen efficacy in and awareness of political life remain few and far between.

Preaching: An Overview

The second type of activity about which the clergy were asked was their preaching and spoken engagements in church. In this respect, the research sought to evaluate the kinds of messages the clergy give to Christians when they have the opportunity to address the larger body of faithful. Attention to this aspect of clergy behavior follows both intuitive and theoretical sense. Preaching can prioritize social concerns and make certain issues public, while others are left essentially private. Moreover, the messages which the faithful hear in church presumably carry important guidelines for behavior in the social world (see Langton 1986). Indeed, research by Calhoun-Brown (1996) indicates that being a member of a church where political messages are heard can be an important impetus to political efficacy and participation. The spoken messages given by the clergy in church thus represent an important dimension of their political activities at the grassroots.

While the questions sought to assess the general character of clergy preaching, their more specific function was to gauge whether and how frequently the clergy provided messages which could raise the political awareness and efficacy of local citizens. In this respect, the research focused on the extent to which clergy either: (1) addressed specific problems pertaining to local state-society relations, or (2) aimed to empower the Christians and encourage their participation in public life. Under the first scenario, the clergy might have raised and condemned local instances of injustice or corruption, or directly assailed politicians for failing to address the needs of the area. One priest for example recounted his preaching about the lack of responsiveness to citizens:

I was speaking on the theme of love and asked, 'how does the government love its people? We can ask about those aspects where it is doing well, but also about how it is failing? We see the price of commodities going high. And even though the wealth in this country is for the people, it seems it is being enjoyed by only a few. When those few people are eating, they are forgetting us here in the villages.'¹

The second scenario was exemplified those clergy who consciously attempted, through preaching, to remove psychological or socio-cultural impediments to political activity or voicing interests. An example is witnessed in the comments of this priest:

Most of the people in these areas still have those fears from Kamuzu. There are very few who will talk of something. So in church I tell them, '(Y)ou Christians now have not only the right, but a duty to remind your MP all the time about things in his area. And if he does not listen you should let us know.'²

We begin with an overview of the clergy's *primary* preaching themes. The clergy were asked the question "Tell me about your preaching, what issues do you mostly address?" One or two issues were usually reported--providing a total of 77 responses. These were then organized into 11 thematic categories. The chart below (Figure 5-2) indicates and ranks the key themes--political or otherwise--about which the clergy reported preaching.

In general, the clergy tend to address relatively conventional themes--modifying individual behavior, developing deeper spirituality, or fostering harmonious social relations. It is notable as well, that various "political" themes are raised by the clergy. Taken collectively, these themes account for about 10 percent of all those mentioned by the clergy.

¹ Interview, June 20, 1996.

² Interview, April 1, 1996.

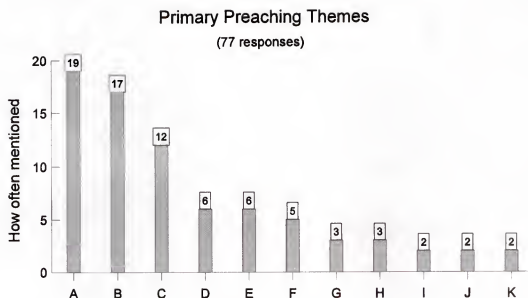


Figure 5-2: Primary Preaching Themes of Local Clergy Interviewed

A: Family Relations/Christian Living

B: Individual Morality

C: Faith/Spirituality

D: Stewardship (care of the church)

E: Doctrine/Instructional

F: Salvation

G: Social Issues: AIDS, crime, youth behavior

H: Politics: Local substantive issues

I: Politics: Accountability and honesty in public life

J: Politics: Need for unity and peaceful coexistence between parties

K: Encouraging participation in public life

Importantly, however, not all of the political themes mentioned by the clergy reflect efforts to raise awareness of local problems or spur participation. Consider the issue of peaceful coexistence between parties (J). Both clergy who mentioned that they raised the issue expressed that they did so largely because they felt the church was threatened by the potential divisiveness of democratic politics. Much the same, the

theme of honesty and accountability in public life (I), though addressing issues which are important for the normative environment of governance, was also of limited relevance to local concerns. In essence this entailed raising issues such as corruption or honesty, but discussing them in very general terms, and not always referencing the government. Specific local issues were not addressed.

The categories H (local substantive issues) and K (encouraging participation) indicate the themes which carried manifest potential to shape political awareness and efficacy among local citizens. Of the total number of responses, these were mentioned about 6 percent of the time. Thus, the global overview of the clergy's *primary* preaching themes suggests that, as a whole, the clergy only infrequently address local political concerns in their preaching.

In order to better gauge the extent of political preaching by the clergy, as well as the types of issues raised, the ministers and priests were asked a second question: "Do you ever talk about politics in church? How?" This provided an indication of the extent to which locally-centered political issues were raised, relative to other politically-focused themes. Six thematic emphases emerged. These are listed in the chart (Figure 5-3) below along with the frequency with which they were mentioned.

The chart indicates that most clergy do discuss politics in some form or another, while a sizable minority avoid the subject altogether or mention "politics" only to stress that it should be kept out of the church. In the latter scenario, "politics" no doubt served as a shorthand for describing partisan machinations and divisiveness. Beyond this, the most widely discussed political issue by the clergy concerns the need for accountability and honesty in public life. Two other notable political themes included the need for

peaceful coexistence between parties and societal misperceptions of freedom since the onset of multi-party politics. To be sure, these are important issues which reflect some level of clerical concern for the political issues which confront Malawi's new democracy. However, as I mentioned above, only with considerable interpretive license could we conclude that raising such issues reflected clergy efforts to raise awareness or efficacy among the faithful. As with the responses to the first question about preaching, only the two categories "local issues" and "encouraging participation" offer indications of such efforts. Together these themes account for twelve out of fifty-one (24 percent) of the responses by the clergy.

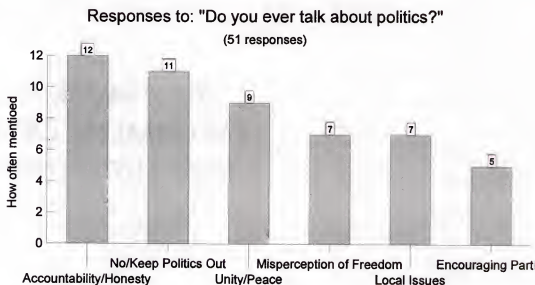


Figure 5-3: Political Themes Raised by the Clergy

Community Role

The final area of clerical activity which was examined was their role in the wider local community. The key issue in this respect was whether or not they served in an

advocacy type of role for citizens, thereby increasing the potential of state responsiveness and accountability to local interests. In order to assess this, the clergy were asked about their contact with local political officials, how they had personally responded to the problems confronting the people in their area, and how they had responded to any injustices or abuses of power in their area. Out of a total of forty-seven clergy, fifteen (32 percent) had, on their own initiative, raised a community issue with a local political or government official.

Among these fifteen cases, however, advocacy efforts varied. A few clergy, repeatedly sought contact with officials, while others had engaged officials only once. To discern these variations, the clergy were categorized by their effort levels. If they had only once raised an issue, the clergy were categorized as low effort. Those who had done so twice or more fell into the high effort category. Among the fifteen, seven undertook advocacy efforts at high levels of effort, while eight did so at low effort levels. The chart below displays the distribution of the clergy in terms of their advocacy efforts.



Figure 5-4: Extent of Advocacy Among Local Clergy Interviewed

As the chart indicates, a sizable minority of clergy did serve as advocates for local interests. However, most did so with relatively low levels of effort.

Three Areas of Activity: The Relative Proportions of Active Clergy

To this point, the discussion of the clergy's responses provides an initial overview of the character of their activities (political and otherwise) at the grassroots. For descriptive purposes, however, it is also important to pinpoint the actual proportion of clergy who claimed that they undertook efforts on behalf of local concerns through these three respective areas of activity. For only with respect to their community role do we know how many of the forty-seven clergy reported that they engaged in efforts along these lines.

Returning to the issue of pastoral work, we recall that the our indices of working for local concerns were two distinct types of practices. The first were efforts to promote and or localize human rights/justice and peace issues. The second was seen in attempts to mobilize and organize citizens for development purposes. The question is how many clergy reported engaging in such practices.

In our initial questions to the clergy about their pastoral priorities, only four (8.5 percent) mentioned such activities as key concerns. However, the clergy were also asked a number of questions about the specifics of their pastoral work. This allowed extra insight into their work outside of what they mentioned as priorities or concerns. Questions probed issues such as clergy emphases and activities when working with smaller prayer groups and lay organizations, and new initiatives they were undertaking in their work. Here, it was revealed that in addition to the four clergy who were devoting

primary attention to human rights concerns and mobilizing/organizing for development, two others also undertook efforts along these lines. Thus of the forty-seven clergy, the number who reported any attention to human rights concerns or mobilizing and organizing citizens for social change was six (12.7 percent)--four as a primary concern, two at a secondary level (see Table 5-1, p. 108).

As to preaching, the key issue concerns the number of clergy who reported that they either primarily or occasionally: (1) addressed specific problems pertaining to local state-society relations; or (2) aimed to empower the Christians and encourage their participation in public life. That is, what proportion indicated that they undertook efforts to increase the political awareness and efficacy of local citizens through their preaching?

The specific number of those who reported that they raised either of these themes as a primary emphases in their preaching was four. This represents 8.5 percent of the total of the forty-seven clergy interviewed. In addition, another nine (19 percent) indicated that they did so on those select occasions when they raised political issues in church.¹

Finally, as has already been described, fifteen clergy (32 percent) reported local-level advocacy efforts. Seven did so at high levels, eight at low levels.

Table 5-1 below summarizes the findings about the relative proportions of clergy who reported efforts to address local concerns in these three areas of activity.

¹ One important issue, which falls outside of the research, concerns the impact of such preaching. The project focuses on the extent of clergy activism--as measured by frequency of preaching on discrete topics. However, whether greater frequency of preaching on such issues implies greater impact is a debatable point. The research does not address this.

Table 5-1: The Clergy's Local-level Efforts in Three Areas of Activity

Activity	Working for local political concerns indicated by:	Number of clergy undertaking activity:	Total
Pastoral work	Advancing human rights or justice and peace efforts or Organizing/mobilizing citizens for development ends	<u>As a priority:</u> 4 (8.5%) <u>As a secondary emphasis:</u> 2 (4.2%)	6 (13%)
Preaching	Raising local substantive issues or Encouraging participation in public life	<u>As primary theme:</u> 4 (8.5%) <u>Raising theme occasionally:</u> 9 (19%)	13 (27%)
Community role	Serving as advocate/Contacting political or state officials on local issue	<u>At high effort levels:</u> 7 (15%) <u>At low effort levels:</u> 8 (17%)	15 (32%)

This overview of the clergy activities in these three different areas suggest two broad patterns within their political behavior. First, there are differences among the clergy in the extent to which they address local political concerns and issues. Whether looking at pastoral work, preaching, or their community role, it is apparent that some clergy are more active than others. Secondly, at that, the clergy as a whole are not highly active in efforts to address the political concerns of local citizens. Most focus on conventional emphases in their preaching and pastoral work. Advocacy efforts vary, but even here, few clergy have undertaken efforts on more than one occasion.

These two findings represent the central issues to be analyzed in the subsequent chapter. In the following sections, I offer a more precise depiction of both the variances among the clergy in terms of their local-level activism and the general limits in their overall efforts in these regards.

Local-level Activism: Variances Among the Clergy

As mentioned, the findings above suggest that there are differences among the clergy in the extent of their efforts to address local concerns. In order to obtain a more precise assessment of these differences, we turn attention to an overall "local-level activism" ranking. Here, each of the forty-seven clergy was ranked on the basis of his reported activities in the three respective areas: pastoral work, preaching, and community role.

Of the forty-seven clergy, twenty-two (46.8 percent) claimed to have undertaken some effort on behalf of local concerns in one or more of the three areas. That is, twenty-two had at least attempted to address socio-political concerns through their pastoral work, targeted locally relevant political themes in their preaching, or, on their own initiative, contacted a political authority on some issue in their area. The following coding scheme was then used to rank these twenty-two clergy as "low," "medium," or "high" in terms of their activity levels.

Regarding pastoral work, the clergy were given two points if they indicated that either human rights/ justice and peace concerns or mobilizing/organizing for development were priorities. If they devoted only secondary emphasis to these issues, they obtained one point. As to preaching, the clergy were awarded two points if their primary preaching themes included addressing specific local issues or encouraging participation. One point was awarded if they addressed these themes at all. Regarding their community involvement, two points were awarded if they claimed to undertake advocacy at high levels of effort. Those who did so with low effort obtained one point.

The respective scores were then tabulated. Clergy who obtained a total score of one point were ranked as "low" in terms of activity. Two or three points represented "moderate" activity. Those scoring four or above were ranked as "high". The remaining twenty-five clergy with zero points were labeled as 'inactive.'² The activism rankings for the clergy are represented in the chart below.

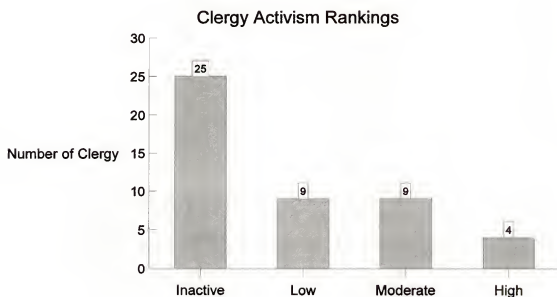


Figure 5-5: Activism Rankings for Local Clergy Interviewed

² To be sure, placing the clergy in one of these four categories reflects some level subjectivity in the research process--both in the clergy self-reports of their activities and in the author's interpretations of their reports. For this reason, there is arguably some grey area between those ranked for example as "low" and others ranked as "moderate." Nonetheless, the rankings, do provide a legitimate perspective on, and basis to evaluate, the local-level activism of the clergy. This is especially true in so far as we can be quite confident about placements at the top and bottom of the activism scale. The differences between the clergy in these categories were very stark, making their placements in their respective categories reliable indices.

Though many clergy are "inactive", a significant number report differing degrees of efforts to enhance the political awareness and efficacy of citizens in their communities and increase state responsiveness to local needs. This, in turn, presents one of the key questions for analysis in the subsequent chapter: Why are some clergy more active on behalf of local concerns than others? That is, what are the factors that motivate or allow clergy efforts to address the political needs of citizens in their communities? Before proceeding to answer this question, it is important to place this pattern of variance within the context of a second more general characteristic in the clergy's local behavior. As I specify below, the larger pattern is one of limited clergy efforts on behalf of local concerns.

Limits to Local Clergy Activism

The limits in the clergy's local-level activism is in the first place evident in the chart above. Twenty-five out of the forty-seven interviewed reported no local-level activism and only four can truly be considered highly active in terms of their efforts. It should be added that many of those in the category of low activity had perhaps preached only once in a great while about local-level issues, or undertaken advocacy in a very limited manner. This highlights that the distinctions between "low", "moderate", and "high" activism need to be taken seriously.

Moreover, the ranking scheme above actually may overstate the extent of clergy interest in and activism on behalf of local concerns. This becomes evident when we draw on other data from the research.

For instance, during two local-level field stays, the author was in regular contact with two Catholic priests for three months each. Both priests reported to have undertaken advocacy at low levels of effort and both also claimed that they did, on occasion, preach about political themes specifically focused on substantive issues at the local level. Both were thus classified as "moderate" in the above rankings. But in the over twenty sermons observed, such political themes were never addressed. Moreover, their advocacy was neither visible nor reported by parishioners. This is not to question the integrity of their responses to my inquiries. The issue is raised because it suggests that many political acts targeting grassroots interests are haphazard and infrequent even for those ranking as moderately active.

The visible observations were quite different during the visits with clergy ranking as "high" in terms of activity. In three out of four visits, each for no more than forty-eight hours, the author was able to observe some unique political activities. One priest was showing a film about Salvadoran Archbishop Romero, murdered for his criticism of injustice, to his parish council. Another was in the process of seeking out other clergy in the area to create a local body to address community issues. The instances where clergy visibly demonstrated notable commitment and activity for local concerns were both uncommon and confined to those who ranked as "high."

In addition, though the data indicate that some clergy are active on behalf of local concerns, this does not mean that their behavior is consistent. Consider the clergy's responses to the specific question of how they had reacted to local injustices or abuses of power of which they were aware. These are represented in the chart below.

Of the forty-seven interviewed, twenty-nine said that they were aware of a local injustice or abuse of power. However, only eight had addressed the issue in their verbal interactions with Christians or by contacting a political official. Three others had acted on one issue, but not on others. Eighteen had done nothing about the injustices or abuses of power of which they were aware.

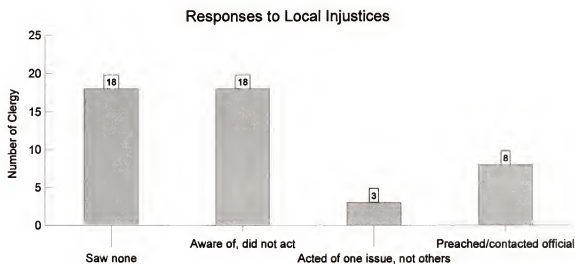


Figure 5-6: Reported Responses to Injustices Among Clergy Interviewed

To be sure, this neglect of local issues took on interesting manifestations in specific cases. One Catholic priest, for example, obtained a low advocacy ranking for his one-time involvement with a farmer's club in their interactions with the local agricultural advisor. Yet he was aware of numerous other issues in his community--food for work schemes where the former never materialized, chiefs distributing free fertilizer only to their relatives--to which he never responded. Another priest who reported preaching

regularly on the need for state attention to local issues knew that relief maize had been inequitably distributed, but did not take action.

Finally, the motivations for certain interventions into community affairs also raise questions about some of the activism represented in the chart above. Simply put, some cases need to be treated with caution as to whether they indicate a cleric consciously committed to local-level advocacy. One minister, for example, went to complain about the lack of transparency in local business loan disbursement only after he was denied a loan himself. Another priest called upon the local District Commissioner when he found that chiefs were requiring villagers to make financial contributions to support witchcraft cleansing exercises. Whether he was championing the cause of the local villager or keeping pagan practices off his turf is unclear, both themes came up in discussion.

The point in raising these issues is not to second-guess the finding from the interviews that some clergy are more active than others in their efforts to work for local interests. It is only to point out that some clergy who reported local-level activity also provided evidence to suggest that their activism is limited in scope and consistency and/or not wholeheartedly inspired by unselfish commitment to justice for citizens at the grassroots. In this respect, the limits in the overall extent of clergy interest in and activity on behalf of local concerns becomes even more apparent.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to address a basic empirical question. That was, to what extent do rank and file Presbyterian and Catholic clergy undertake activities which can

improve the quality of democracy at the grassroots? The data suggests that the answer to this question has a dual nature.

First, on a general level, the extent of clergy activity to address local-level needs appears limited. This is drawn out by both qualitative and quantitative evidence from my clergy interviews, as well as other observational data. In this respect, the hope that clergy, as part of civil society, will champion grassroots causes and help to deepen democracy appears inconsistent with the general pattern of actual clergy practices witnessed at the local level.

Second, this said, there are nonetheless important variances among the clergy in the extent to which they undertake activities which can improve grassroots political conditions. Indeed, a select few are highly active in this respect. Such activity may in turn be the important progenitor of greater citizen efficacy and participation in politics and greater state responsiveness to community concerns.

The critical task which now confronts the research is to obtain a greater understanding of local clergy behavior. The first issue concerns the variance among the clergy. Why are some more active than others on behalf of grassroots concerns? Why do some perform the critical functions of civil society in fostering empowerment and state accountability? On the other hand, we need to obtain a greater understanding of the limited role which most of the clergy embrace. What are the factors that constrain the clergy's activism at the local level? Only by answering these questions will we have a greater understanding of the propensity of the churches to positively contribute to grassroots political conditions over the long term. It is to these issues we turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

EXPLAINING CLERGY POLITICAL BEHAVIOR: HOLY AND HUMAN INFLUENCES

In the previous chapter, I noted two distinct findings about the clergy's political behavior, each of which raises analytical questions. In the first place we saw that there were variances among the clergy in the extent to which they engaged in efforts to address the political concerns of citizens in their communities. This brings us to ask the question of what motivates or facilitates clergy activism. In the second place, we noted that as a whole, clergy activism at the grassroots was fairly limited. In this respect, we need to obtain an understanding of the factors which constrain the propensity of the clergy to actively address social and temporal concerns of average citizens.

Exploring these issues is central to the larger effort to understand the character of local churches as part of civil society. By illuminating the factors which inform clergy political behavior, we will obtain a better sense of the likelihood that they will positively contribute to the quality of democracy over the long term. Indeed, policy interventions designed to influence the nature of clergy behavior at local levels will do well to note the findings. This is especially true in so far as those findings address not only how such policy interventions might be pursued, but the extent to which their desired effect is even possible in Malawi's current situation.

The goal of this chapter then is to explain the nature of clergy political behavior. Specifically, why are some more active than others in efforts to address the socio-political concerns of citizens in their communities? Moreover, why is there a general pattern of limited clergy activism in these regards? After a review of some of the key theoretical perspectives which inform the analysis, the chapter's central arguments unfold in two sections. The first attempts to examine the variances in the clergy's activism. Here, the analysis indicates, on the one hand, that attention to the religious ideas informing the clergy is critical if we seek to understand why some are more active on behalf of local concerns. Clergy who hold or have been exposed to religious themes stressing the need for socio-political engagement on the part of the church tend to have a greater propensity than others to undertake efforts to address political issues in their communities. On the other hand, the analyses also indicate that the clergy's proximity to the social environment negatively impacts their levels of activism. In the second section then, I more specifically address how attention to social influences on the clergy helps us to account for limits in their overall efforts to initiate or work for changes in the socio-political conditions which affect of the faithful. Because clergy mirror the predominant practices and values of the social context, their inclinations to help improve the quality of democracy at the grassroots is itself limited. This in turn suggests, somewhat paradoxically, that the propensity of social organizations to serve the critical "functions" of civil society may indeed be undermined by their relationship to and embeddedness in the larger social context.

What Shapes Clergy Political Behavior: Theoretical Frameworks and Perspectives

How do we make sense of the character of clergy behavior at the grassroots? The literature points to three types of potential influences on clergy behavior: institutional, religious, and social. Importantly, while these factors receive different levels of emphasis in studies, they are not treated here as contending theoretical perspectives. Instead, I maintain that attention to all three factors--and the interactions between them--is critical if we want to understand the patterns of clergy behavior at the grassroots. Below, I briefly review how each of these three factors is treated in the literature.

Institutional Factors

In focusing on the institutional factors which shape clergy behavior the literature draws attention to the character of the larger ecclesiastical organizations of which they are a part. In this respect, clergy behavior is seen to reflect the larger organizational context. To be sure, however, authors emphasize the causal importance of different aspects of that organizational context. In particular, three different thematic emphases emerge in literature which addresses the role of institutional factors.

The first emphasis directs attention to what might be called the essential character of religious institutions. Here, authors stress that the basic nature of churches mitigates against clerical political activities devoted to social change. In their view, churches exist largely for the pursuit of fundamentally religious ends, such as evangelization or providing salvation. Basic institutional goals concern organizational survival and maintenance so that these ends can be achieved. In turn, church political behavior reflects

instrumental concerns as guided by the essential imperatives of the basic religious mission. For this reason, churches are rarely involved in efforts to create fundamental social change (see Bruneau 1974, Williams 1989, and Kassimir 1998).

The logical extension of this perspective is that clergy political behavior--of whatever sort--reflects these essential characteristics of religious institutions. Only in rare instances of dramatic social discord will the church depart from its primary focus on evangelization and religious socialization efforts to embrace political activities. As such, one should not expect the clergy to engage in practices and activities which do not pertain to the pursuit of these basic objectives.

As one can infer, this emphasis fits well with our earlier finding of generally limited local-level activism by the clergy. Clergy efforts to address the political concerns and needs of citizens in their communities fall outside the scope of the expected institutional behaviors, especially in the post-authoritarian context. This said, as I will argue in more detail below, there are obvious problems with assuming that such larger institutional logics shape all clergy behavior. For one, such a perspective denies the clergy any autonomous range for political behavior. Moreover, the perspective does very poorly in accounting for the variances in the clergy's local-level activism.

The second emphasis focuses on the causal role of institutional designs. Here, the basic premise is that organizational frameworks and structures--and importantly, distributions of authority within those frameworks--are determinant factors in shaping the likelihood of clergy efforts to initiate social change. The manner in which such influence is realized may depend on other factors however. Hank Johnston and Josef Figa (1988), focus on the role of institutional design in affecting the politicization of local churches

against authoritarian regimes. In their view, “the greater the organizational distance from the center of ecclesiastical authority, the greater the likelihood for politicized church activities” (43). Clergy in decentralized churches are less likely to be subject to the dictates of ecclesiastical leaders who likely frown upon clerical behaviors which can draw the church into political conflicts. In such contexts, then, clergy in decentralized churches should be more active than clergy from centralized churches.

Research dealing with other contexts however indicates that the opposite relationship may actually obtain. Winter (1973) emphasizes that clergy in congregational (decentralized) denominations will be less insulated from lay influences than those in more hierarchically organized churches. As a result, they find it more difficult to embrace activities which run afoul of the interests and values of dominant lay actors. This suggests that while institutional design may be important, the impact of that design on clergy behavior may derive from the socio-political context in which the local churches are situated. This latter point is crucial for this analysis. As we will see, institutional designs are particularly important in how they mediate the impact of other societal influences on the clergy.

The final emphasis specifies that the orientations and priorities of the church leaders will shape local clergy behavior. Nancy Ammerman’s (1981) study of the civil rights activities of the southern clergy in the United States, for instance, indicates that civil rights activism tended to be positively associated with being a member of a denomination wherein the hierarchy was supportive of civil rights. Such an emphasis on institutional tenor and priorities can also be found in Campbell and Pettigrew’s (1959) seminal study of clergy behavior during the Little Rock racial crisis of the late 1950s. In

their view, the “professional reference system”--consisting of the influences on clergy behavior emerging from national and regional church bodies and the local ecclesiastical hierarchy--had an important impact on clergy behavior during the Little Rock crisis.

In short, different sorts of institutional factors hold the potential to shape the political activities of local clergy. As we will see in our analysis, however, while institutional factors do influence the extent and nature of clergy activism, the role of these factors cannot be considered in isolation of religious and social influences on clergy behavior.

Religious Factors

The second set of factors which obtain attention in the literature are religious in character. Here the basic premise is that religious ideas--such as theologies and subjective beliefs--are important motives and guides for clerical relations with the social world. Clergy political activities are thus linked to the distinct religious ideas.

Some of the most forceful elaborations of this theme are found in studies of churches and politics in Latin America. For example, in his major work on the Catholic Church in Venezuela and Columbia, Daniel Levine (1981) illuminates how different understandings of faith and calling shape the way that Catholic Bishops interpret social problems and undertake political activities on behalf of citizens. Institutional imperatives are still an important factor guiding church politics, but such imperatives need to be understood in conjunction with the religious ideas which inform church practices. Such themes also resonate in the work of Scott Mainwaring, who examines the evolution of the politics of the Catholic Church in Brazil. In his view, “the way the Church intervenes

in politics depends fundamentally on the way it perceives its religious mission" (1986: 4). For these authors then, patterns of socio-political engagement on the part of sectors of the church are linked to ideas and frameworks which inform religious actors. For this reason, changes in religious ideas, especially those associated with liberation theology, are important. Such ideas propel clerics to more activist roles in addressing social problems which afflict citizens.

Authors dealing with churches in the American context similarly have stressed the causal influence of religious ideas on clergy behavior. In the previously noted study of clergy activity during the Little Rock racial crisis of 1956-57, Campbell and Pettigrew (1959) suggested that a minister's expectations and images of himself as servant of God shaped his behavioral responses to contentious issue of racial integration.¹ More conclusive research by Nelsen et al. (1973) indicates that clergy understandings and self-definitions of their roles were important determinants of social protest behavior during the 1960s. Clergy who embraced traditional understandings of their mission tended to be less politically active than those who embraced more novel conception of themselves as "community problem solvers." Finally, Tygart (1977), demonstrates that theological orientations and other "belief variables" had an impact on clergy activism during the civil rights movement.

The attention to such religious factors in the literature has fairly obvious implications for the questions posed in this chapter. In particular, this literature suggests

¹ This is referred to as the "self-reference system." Importantly, they also maintain that the while self-reference system may call for political action, that action may nonetheless be curtailed by pressures from the institution and local congregations.

that patterns in the political behavior of the local clergy in Malawi may be accounted for by distinct understandings of mission or theologies among the clergy. As such, the religious factor behind clergy activism (or non-activism) needs to be seriously explored.

Social Factors

A final insight from the literature pertains to the important role of social influences on the clergy. Here, authors emphasize that the clergy, and churches more generally, are shaped by forces in the social environment. This is conceptualized in two distinct ways in the literature.

First, the religious ideas which inform the clergy cannot be understood in isolation of the larger social environment. Liberation theology, for instance, emerged from and circulated in environments characterized by marked structural inequalities and injustices, exploitation, and repression. As such, the attendant themes of liberation and conscientization of the popular sectors took on especial salience and carried clear implications for clerical practice. The interaction between religious ideas and the socio-political context provides the basis for understanding political activities by the church.² The implication is that analyzing the clergy's politics demands attention to the social values, conflicts, and experiences which can underpin their religious views.

A second view emphasizes that clergy political behavior may have nothing to do with their status as religiously-inspired actors or members of larger ecclesiastical organizations. Instead, the clergy are seen to be embedded in the social world. Their concerns, priorities, and relations *as social and economic actors* are viewed as the motive

² See also Borer (1993), Mainwaring and Wilde (1989), Levine (1986).

force behind their political activities (or non-activities). Some of the clearest discussions of such themes are offered by authors dealing with the politics of African churches.³ Churches, it is argued, are marked by their permeable boundaries with the rest of the social environment. The behavior of the clergy becomes more comprehensible in this light. Ian Linden (1977), for instance, highlights the ethnic motives for clerical involvement in the Rwandan revolution. These themes also resonate in Van Hoyweghen's (1996) review of churches in the recent Rwandan genocide. Exploring a less dramatic issue, Kassimir (1998) links the ambiguous political role of the Catholic Church in Uganda with the "defensive" behavior of Catholic elites who try to curtail the impact of larger social influences on the laity and clergy.

The most forceful elaborations of this theme are found in commentaries that focus on class character of the clergy. As Bayart (1993: 189), Fatton (1992: 77), and MacGaffey (1990) all emphasize, churches are embedded in relations of power. Most critically, clergy represent the privileged sector of society, engaging in class formation and reproduction through the use of church resources, as well as alliances with political elites. As such, clerical efforts to work for changes in the basic socio-political relationships between powerful and powerless are limited. As MacGaffey puts it, "no matter how explicitly opposed their leaders may be to the government's moral quality and political aims, the churches, Catholic and Protestant, inevitably participate in class relations, and their political role is accordingly compromised" (1990: 261).

³ Such themes are also evident in Ammerman's (1981) work on clergy behavior in the southern United States.

Arguably, this emphasis on the class character of the clergy takes more of an interpretive approach to understanding the behavior of churches. As such, the empirical evidence presented by such authors can appear somewhat selective. Nonetheless, as my own research indicates, such a perspective needs to be taken seriously as it highlights one potential explanation for the character of clergy political behavior.

Attention to these three factors forms the basis of our investigation of the local clergy's political behavior in Malawi. Importantly, as the research reviewed above indicates, there is considerable interaction between these factors. Thus, while the analysis will explore each of these potential influences in isolation of one another, the interactions between them will also receive considerable attention. Indeed, only by focusing on these interactions can we begin to fully comprehend some of the puzzles presented in the previous chapter.

In the following sections I examine two basic issues inspired by our findings to this point. First, I seek to analyze the variances among the clergy in the extent of their efforts to address local political concerns and issues. Secondly, I pose the question of what constrains clergy activism, attempting to account for the larger pattern of limited clergy engagement on behalf of local concerns.

Assessing the Variances in Clergy Activism

How then do we account for variances among the clergy in their local-level activism? In attempting to answer this question, I assess the impact of both institutional and religious influences. As will be seen, attention to both of these is critical to our understanding of the local clergy's political behavior. This is true in the first place as they alert us to the

factors which facilitate and motivate clergy activism on behalf of local political concerns. In the second place, the analyses also provide important clues about the factors which constrain clergy activism.

Institutional Factors

I begin by exploring the impact of institutional factors. The literature suggests that two distinct aspects of the clergy's organizational context could lead to differing degrees of local-level activism. The first is the character of their churches' institutional designs. The second is the larger orientation and priorities enunciated by leaders of the clergy's respective ecclesiastical organization.

As the reader may be aware, the organizational frameworks of Presbyterian and Catholic churches are fundamentally different. Indeed, one of the agendas of the Calvinist revolution was to restructure ecclesiastical authority relations in such a way as to diminish hierarchical control over the religious experience of the laity. The result is that Presbyterian clergy operate in a much more decentralized organization than their Catholic counterparts. Presbyterian clergy run local congregations in cooperation with lay leaders or "elders," who have considerable say in the actual conduct of church affairs. Catholics, on the other hand, are less responsible to the laity than they are to the universal church, embodied in the bishop of their respective diocese.

As indicated above, the literature suggests that such differences in institutional design could influence local clergy behavior. However, research is less clear on the direction of that influence. Some suggest that distance from ecclesiastical elites will foster greater local activism, especially in authoritarian contexts. Others maintain that

insulation from local influence increases the likelihood of clergy activism. The direction of influence, I have suggested, may depend of the nature of the socio-political environment in which the clergy are situated.

The first step in assessing the impact of institutional design is to compare the activity levels of Presbyterian and Catholic clergy. We draw on the same sample described in the previous chapter. Importantly, for this specific analysis, expatriate clergy, (a total of six) were removed from the sample, leaving the number of clergy under investigation at forty-one. The reason for doing this is that, as I will detail below, expatriate clergy are relatively unique in their propensity to engage in local-level activism. As no expatriate Presbyterian clergy were included among the original forty-seven interviewed, it was better to remove the Catholic expatriates. Failing to do so might unnecessarily bias our perspective.

The cross-tabulation below compares the levels of activism of Malawian Presbyterian and Catholic clergy.

Table 6-1: Activity Levels of Catholic and Presbyterian Clergy (No expatriates)

Activism Rank	Catholic	Presbyterian	Row Total
Inactive	10	14	24 (58%)
Low	3	3	6 (15%)
Moderate	7	1	8 (20%)
High	2	1	3 (7%)
Column Total	22 (54%)	19 (46%)	41 (100%)

Tau-c: .31 (.032)

Proportion of active Catholic clergy: .54

Proportion of active Presbyterian clergy: .26

P-value: .0228

As is evident, the proportion of Catholic clergy who are active is higher than that of Presbyterian clergy. Moreover, these differences can be asserted with some level of statistical precision. This is on one hand indicated by the tau-c statistic. On the other, the differences in proportion of active Catholic clergy compared to Presbyterian clergy can be asserted at a 95 percent level of confidence.

The findings suggest that differences in the institutional designs of these churches may indeed be exerting an impact on clergy behavior. However, before concluding as such we must rule out the possibility that the differences between the Presbyterian and Catholic clergy are accounted for by a second institutional factor; that of the ecclesiastical orientation and priorities set forth by church leaders. The guiding premise in this respect is that clergy activism emerges in those churches where authorities endorse, encourage, or provide models of such activism.

The evidence from the research indicates that such is not the case. The General Secretary of the Blantyre Synod of the CCAP is among the most vocal of all church leaders in Malawi. In addition to calling for an active church role in politics, he has taken stances on national political issues independent of other church leaders. For instance, he publicly condemned the government and IMF sponsored structural adjustment program. Beyond this, he has even encouraged activism among his own clergy. Consider his comments at a Presbyterian human rights conference.

It's no use calling yourself the church when your mouth is shut. The church has a right to ask government about its actions and an obligation to denounce abuses of power. You (clergy) have a right to play a political role, to denounce, warn, and prophesize.⁴

⁴ Comments by Misanjo Kansilanga, General Secretary of Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian. General Synod Human Rights Conference,

Such comments, it should be added, were never heard from any of the Catholic bishops.

Thus despite the fact that Blantyre Synod leader is no less encouraging of clergy activism than his Catholic counterparts, the Presbyterian clergy are less active in efforts to address local concerns. This lends support to the proposition that the differences in the institutional designs of these churches are exerting some influence on clergy behavior. The analysis appears to corroborate the view of Winter (1973) that hierarchical churches will be more conducive to political activism by the clergy. As I will discuss below, this raises the question of why in the Malawian context the more decentralized ecclesiastical organization is less facilitative of clergy activism.

Differences in the orientations of church leaders also fail to account the variances among the Catholic clergy in terms of their local activism. We might expect that the more active Catholic clergy would come from dioceses where such activities were encouraged by the bishop. Compared to Synod General Secretaries, Catholic Bishops possess enormous authority to set policies concerning the overall character of church engagements with the faithful and society. As Vallier puts it, the bishop is, "in the broadest sense of the term, a local religious king" (1970: 86, cited in Levine 1981). As we will see, however, the tenor and priorities of diocesan bishops appears to have little effect on the political behavior of local Catholic clergy.

As mentioned, clergy from three dioceses were interviewed. From a broad perspective, the differences in the social and theological orientations of the bishops of these dioceses were not very stark. Nonetheless some differences were discernable.

The bishop of the southern-most diocese (Blantyre) under investigation was widely regarded as the most conservative in the country. In this diocese ecclesiastical innovations--such as using drums during services--were frowned upon. Pastoral priorities for this Bishop clearly involved "traditional" or "conventional" concerns, such as extending provision of the sacraments or improving diocesan administration. Clergy who went abroad for education were encouraged to go to Rome, rather than North America, seen as a hotbed of liberal Catholicism. Finally, the Bishop himself was rumored to have only haltingly supported the issuing of the March 1992 pastoral letter which condemned the Banda regime and set in motion the process of political transition in the country. Public statements since the transition devoted attention to issues such as crime or the lack of cleanliness in urban areas.

The northern-most diocese investigated has historically been viewed as the more liberal of all those in the country. Much of this reputation is owed to the activities of Bishop Kalilombe, active from 1970-1974. Efforts during his brief tenure concentrated on "indigenizing the church," giving greater voice to laity in running affairs, and bringing social concerns to light--albeit in a very apolitical matter. Kalilombe was replaced by a "conservative" Bishop until 1991. Since that time however, a younger "liberal" Bishop had assumed authority in the dioceses. This bishop had been a leading figure in the transition, and served as the representative of the Episcopal Conference on the Public Affairs Committee. His vision for his diocese involved conventional concerns such as improving financial management, increasing the ability of parishes to support themselves, and improving priestly formation (training). However, he also addressed social themes such the need for care of orphans and the important role of youth in the society. Finally

he was one of the few Bishops to endorse and support the promotion “justice and peace” concerns. His diocese had one of the more active commissions. Indeed, subsequent to the research, each parish was called upon to develop its own justice and peace commission.

Between these two dioceses was Zomba diocese. The bishop here had occupied his position since the early 1980s. Widely regarded as a quiet, soft-spoken man, his social and theological vision occupies a middle ground between the two described above. There was no Justice and Peace commission in his diocese. However, the Bishop was open to ecclesiastical innovation, such as training for transformation (described earlier) programs, the use of small Christian Communities, and efforts to “inculturate” the Gospel. Priests here were in many respects less-directly supervised than those from other dioceses.

Below we examine the relative activity levels of priests in each respective diocese. The dioceses are listed below on a spectrum from least to most progressive. We would expect clergy in the far right column to be the most active.

Table 6-2: Activity Rank for Catholic Clergy by Diocese

Activism Rank	<u>Diocese:</u>			Row Total
	Blantyre	Zomba	Lilongwe	
Inactive	4	3	4	11 (39%)
Low	2	3	1	6 (21%)
Moderate	3	3	2	8 (29%)
High	2	---	1	3 (11%)
Column Total	11 (39%)	9 (32%)	8 (29%)	28 (100%)

Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis): .365 (.833)

As we can see, there are few differences between the dioceses in terms of the activity levels of the clergy. To this it should be added that relatively equal proportions of expatriate clergy were present in the respective samples from each diocese.

Our review thus suggests the following about how institutional factors shape clergy behavior. First, the tenor or priorities as enunciated at the top of in ecclesiastical organization do not appear to exert much of an impact on the extent of local clergy activism. This is true whether we examine differences between the two churches or among the dioceses of the Catholic Church. Second, the type of institutional factors which do impact clergy behavior are those pertaining to institutional design. In particular, a hierarchical structure appears much more conducive to clergy activism than decentralized ecclesiastical structure. This raises important issues for further analysis.

Religious Factors

The literature suggests that distinct clerical understandings of mission, as well as affinity with certain theological perspectives, can serve to both motivate and deter clergy activism. In exploring the impact of such religious factors on the local-level activism of Malawi's clergy, the research focuses on two areas of importance. The first are the mission orientations which the clergy hold individually. The second concerns their theological training and experiences.

Mission orientations

The basic issue in focusing on individual understandings of mission concerns what the clergy feel that they, as either appendages of the corporate church or successors

to Christ's Apostles, are called to do. As much of the research described above indicates, the type of role orientations which clergy embrace can serve as guides for their interventions into the political world. Building on such insights, the research explores whether there is greater local-level activism from clergy who have understandings of mission which direct attention and effort to address temporal or social issues. The guiding premise, to borrow from Winter, is that, "an activist clergyman can be expected to have a theology and conception of mission which makes his efforts to obtain change in the secular status quo to appear acceptable, if not right within the context of normative Christian doctrine" (1973: 181). In other words, there should be more local activism from a cleric who feels his work is to "bring about His kingdom on earth," than from one who feels his mission is solely to promote salvation.

In order to explore the specific mission orientations guiding the clergy, the forty-seven ministers and priests were asked "How do you personally see your mission or calling as a minister/priest in the church?" This first question was then followed with a second: "What are your goals as a representative of the church?"

To be sure, the responses to the question varied considerably. Most frequently, the clergy centered on what might be called "conventional" or traditional ministerial themes. Typical responses included: "to prepare and administer sacraments to the Christians," "to preach the gospel and care for the Christians' spiritual well being," or "to fight the devil and rebuke sin." Still others placed emphasis on less liturgical, but nonetheless socially withdrawn themes such as the need to simply be available to the Christians or provide a model of moral and prayerful life.

The critical issue for the research, however, was the extent to which clergy made reference to addressing social or community issues when they discussed their understanding of mission or goals. This could include specific references to empowering people or addressing community concerns, or raising more general themes of helping people's social development. The following responses provide examples of such emphases in clergy descriptions of their mission or goals. They come respectively from an expatriate priest, local minister, and local priest:

to listen and see what is happening, what is it people are really talking about, what is really important to them, and helping them in that... listening to people's needs, trying to empower the people.⁵

I have a duty to take people to God and that involves lots of things: preaching, living as we preach, and visiting the sick. ... But it is our duty to address other areas of man, what problems they are facing, it may be political or anything else.⁶

I think of meeting the needs of parishioners and challenges of my community.... I want to make a better human being who is living happy in society.⁷

Intuitively, one would expect that clergy who reference themes such as these would be more attuned to local problems, and, by extension, more active in their communities.

The clergy were differentiated between those who gave high stress, moderate stress, or no stress to socially-oriented themes. "High" stress indicates that these themes were a primary reference point when they described their mission, or that they were mentioned several times. "Moderate" indicates that such themes were addressed in conjunction with others which received higher emphasis. Of all the clergy, three (6.4

⁵ Interview, February 9, 1996.

⁶ Interview, March 20, 1996.

⁷ Interview, March 5, 1996.

percent) placed high stress on such themes, eleven (23.4 percent) placed moderate stress, and thirty-three (70.2 percent) did not mention addressing social or community issues when describing their understanding of mission.

In order to discern whether such mission orientations are associated with higher levels of local activism, Table 6-3 offers a basic cross-tabulation with the rankings of clergy activism. Basic statistics for ordinal data help to display the relationship.

As is clear, clergy who emphasize socially-oriented conceptions of mission tend to be more active in efforts to address political concerns and needs in their communities. Looking at the different categories for mission orientation, of those who did not stress social themes, eleven out of thirty three (33 percent) reported some level of activity. Among those who devoted moderate stress to such themes, eight of eleven (72 percent) reported activity. Virtually all of those who devoted high stress to such themes also ranked high in terms of activity. The relationship is indicated statistically by the tau-c value of .36, providing evidence that as the emphasis devoted to social themes increases, so too does the level of activism.

Table 6-3: Activity Rank by Mission Orientation

Activism Rank	<u>Mission Orientation - Stress on Social Themes:</u>			Total
	None	Moderate	High	
Inactive	22	3	---	25 (53%)
Low	5	4	---	9 (19%)
Moderate	5	4	---	9 (19%)
High	1	---	3	4 (8.5%)
Total	33 (70%)	11 (23%)	3 (6.4%)	47 (100%)

Tau-c: .358 (.0023)

One question that emerges is whether such understandings of mission are independently shaping the local-level activity, or simply providing post hoc justifications for activity motivated by other concerns. In all likelihood, the relationship works both ways: Ideas inform practices; but practices can also inspire the appropriation of ideas. Unfortunately, the question of what causes what cannot be directly answered by the quantitative evidence from the research. This said, qualitative evidence indicates that there is an independent role played by mission orientations. This is especially apparent where clergy offer very stark comments on their faith and work.

Consider, for example, the responses of this Catholic priest to questions concerning his mission:

that at least when they (the Christians) die, they are able to go back to God, in order for him to save them. Now in our church that automatically comes to the giving of sacraments. This is what we are involved in, giving sacraments to people. So that all other things we have, preaching, instructions, is a preparation that these people receive those sacraments that are going to save them.⁸

He adds that his basic understanding has not changed since his ordination. His priorities and activities and work reflect this disposition. Primary emphases are placed on increasing and intensifying the teaching of the catechism. Other concerns are church fund-raising projects, parish administration, and encouraging the Legion of Mary, a traditional devotional group for women. As for his sermons, he mentions that they have not changed since the 1960s, with the stress placed upon returning to God and the sacraments. When it comes to politics, moreover, he stays consciously clear; this although he played an active role in the transition process as a civic educator. He clearly fears the divisive tendencies inherent in democratic politics:

⁸ Interview, January 15, 1996.

This new political change is hampering relationships even among Christians. There is a lot of misunderstanding, and we are not helped by the members of parliament when they come and make party meetings not constituency meetings.

He adds that a climate of fear--a hangover from the authoritarian days--continues to characterize the people of the area. Yet his response is to dissuade involvement in the political world: "I tell them, 'gentlemen, please don't waste your time on politics and parties. Now the government wants us to do away with poverty, so do work!'" Politics is addressed, but not as a priority, and clearly not to stimulate local activity or awareness.

An alternative vision is provided by a second Malawian priest. Highly articulate, he decidedly shies away from issues of salvation or sacraments when discussing his mission. Instead, he anchors his understanding on themes of promoting "self-discovery" and "empowerment" to both strengthen the church and encourage social action on the part of the poor. He complements these emphases with stress on working for "justice and peace" and "humanizing life."

Not surprisingly, he is highly involved in activities centered on addressing local concerns. He has helped organize local women so they could obtain access to government business loans. Three times, he has seen local government officials on the conditions of the area. His verbal interactions with Christians reflect conscious efforts to raise awareness:

The member of Parliament came here and he just said words. So I said (to the Christians), "look at this situation as it is. Prices of things are going up. There is no security. The roads are bad. And he comes here and just says words, words, words"⁹

⁹ Interview, March 16, 1996.

To be sure he is also involved in more conventional activities. But most important is that his ministry is informed by an understanding of mission which motivates distinct efforts to empower and improve the life of citizens at the grassroots. For both of these priests then, the link between religious perspectives and political outlooks and behavior is quite apparent.

Clergy training

The second 'religious factor' to explore concerns the nature of the clergy's training and educational experiences. Here, the analysis is less concerned with personal understandings of mission than with whether or not the clergy have familiarity with theological perspectives which stress the importance of clerical involvement in social affairs. The guiding premise is that exposure to activist notions about the role of the church in the world would motivate political activity on behalf of local concerns.

By most accounts, the local institutions of clerical formation in Malawi have shied away from instructing or exposing students to progressive or socially-oriented ideas in Christian thought. To be sure, the lack of attention to manifestly political theologies is understandable given the political environment during the Banda years. Some Catholic priests trained in the 1980s did report discussions of liberation theology in their seminary experiences. However, such themes were never discussed in direct reference to the Malawian situation nor systematically reviewed.¹⁰ Most instruction focused on relatively conventional Catholic dogma. Indeed, two seminary instructors were dismissed in the

¹⁰ Interestingly, one priest reported that, after hearing of such progressive ideas while in seminary, he did question his superiors on the Malawian situation. He was effectively told to keep his mouth shut.

early 1980s for attempting to introduce unconventional themes such as inculturation and ecumenism to the seminarians. In Presbyterian circles, on the other hand, theologies which directed attention to political issues or called on clerics to respond to social problems never emerged within the curriculum of instruction. Only recently have issues such as development or human rights surfaced as topics of discussion at the major theological college.

With this in mind, two broad propositions emerge about the impact of training or educational experiences on the clergy's political activities. The first concerns when the clergy were trained. We can hypothesize that clergy who were trained and ordained more recently would be more likely to undertake local activism.¹¹ The reason this might be the case is that, while liberation theology or similar ideas were not systematically taught in the seminaries and theological colleges, if raised at all, it would have been at later points over the past thirty-five years.¹² Clergy who were trained and ordained more recently would have had a greater possibility of being exposed to such ideas.

In order to explore this first premise, basic statistical analyses assessed whether any associational relationships obtained between levels of local activism and the length of time since ordination. Among the local Malawian clergy in the sample, dates of ordination ranged from 1959 to 1994. The guiding premise, again is that more recent

¹¹ Stein (1998) examines a similar hypothesis when exploring clergy levels of political tolerance in Nicaragua. Interestingly, his findings suggest that more recent ordinands are among the least tolerant of Nicaraguan clergy.

¹² Liberation theology, as a specific corpus of ideas, dates from the late 60s and early 70s, having emerged largely within the Catholic Church in Latin America. The point at which it obtained salience in other corners of the globe is more difficult to pinpoint. Some suggest that the perspective began to emerge in European circles towards the mid 1970s (Hennelly 1990, Metz and Schlick 1978)

ordinands would demonstrate higher levels of activism. The table below provides statistical indicators of the relationship for local (Malawian) clergy as a whole, as well as for specific sub-groups within that larger category. Negative values indicate a relationship in the expected direction.

The data suggests that, among the clergy as a whole, the length of time since ordination is not associated with differences in activity levels. More recent ordinands are no more active than others. As I mentioned, however, there were some differences in the training experiences which Presbyterian and Catholics received in their respective institutions. A select few Catholics indicated that they were at least exposed to alternative socially-oriented theological perspectives in their formation, while there is no record of similar experiences for Presbyterians. We thus might expect the length of time since ordination would be negatively associated with activism levels for Catholics, but not for Presbyterians.

Table 6-4: Length of Time Since Ordained and Local Activity for Malawian Clergy

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Tau-c</u>	<u>Significance</u>
All Malawian Clergy	41	.106	(.254)
Presbyterian Clergy	19	-.103	(.546)
Catholic Clergy (Malawian)	22	-.176	(.298)
Presbyterian Clergy (Pre-1994 ordinands only)	16	.042	(.778)
Catholic Clergy (Malawian) (Pre-1994 ordinands only)	21	-.274	(.099)*
Catholic Clergy (Malawian) (Pre-1994 ordinands, but foreign educated removed)	16	-.219	(.231)

At first glance, this does not appear case. As is indicated, neither among Catholics separately nor among Presbyterians is there a visible relationship between length of time since ordination and local activism. Interestingly, however, when the one Catholic priest who was ordained in 1994 was removed from the sample, we did observe a statistically significant relationship in the expected direction. For whatever reason, the most recently ordained Malawian priest in the sample was wholly inactive at the grassroots. In turn, removing him from the sample allows us to detect a subtle pattern whereby older clergy appear less likely to address and work for local concerns. In many ways this should not surprise us. Three of the older Catholic clergy in the sample were ordained prior to the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. That their local-level practices reflect relatively traditional understandings of calling and work is understandable. Younger clergy, who in all likelihood were exposed to alternative perspectives on the role of the church in the world, are more active.

Our conclusions in this regard are tempered, however, by the data represented in the last row of the table. Here it becomes evident that when those clergy with foreign education are removed from the sample, the relationship is not as strong and loses statistical significance. To be sure, this does not wholly undermine the indications about the impact of the period of time during which local clergy were trained. However, it does require us to put them in the perspective of a second potentially important influence on the clergy: training which occurs outside of the normal educational experiences. This then brings us to our second proposition about clergy training.

Our second proposition concerns not the timing or period of clergy training, but focuses on their broader educational experiences. Specifically, we suspect clergy with

educational experiences outside or beyond normal Malawian clerical formation to be more likely to address and work for local issues. Intuitively, extra or external educational experiences would allow greater exposure to progressive currents in Christian thought, thereby facilitating their local activism.

Three sub-groups of clergy warrant our attention in this regard. The first are expatriate clergy. Due to their non-local training and frequent visits to congregational headquarters in Europe or North America, they would likely have greater familiarity with diverse notions about the role of the church in socio-political affairs.¹³ Secondly, we devote attention to Malawian clergy educated in Europe or North America. They too are more inclined to be exposed to themes such as liberation theology or other socially-oriented currents in Christian thought. Finally, local clergy who had attended church and donor-sponsored workshops on human rights or justice and peace also saw greater exposure to socially-oriented themes than others. We expect that clergy with these types of educational experiences will report higher levels of activism than clergy who had only undergone the standard local clerical training.

Of the total of the forty-seven clergy, six were expatriate, five had been to North America or Europe for graduate theological education, and seven had attended human rights workshops within Malawi. The cross-tabulation in Table 6-5 below displays the levels of activism for individuals in these respective categories, as compared to other clergy.

¹³ Tortolani (1973) makes a similar line of argument in his discussion of Catholic clergy in Guatemala. See also Froehle (1992) and Williams (1991).

Table 6-5: Activity Rank by Training and Educational Experiences

Activity Rank	Training and Educational Experiences:				Total
	Standard	Attended HR Conference	Expatriate	Foreign-Educated	
Inactive	20	3	1	1	25 (53%)
Low	4	2	3	---	9 (19%)
Moderate	4	1	1	3	9 (19%)
High	1	1	1	1	4 (9%)
Total	29 (62%)	7 (15%)	6 (12%)	5 (11%)	47 (100%)

Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis): 9.029 (.029)

Both the chi-square and the visible patterns in the data are supportive of our larger proposition. Clergy who have obtained educational experiences outside or beyond the normal standard training of a Malawian cleric are more likely to engage in local activism. More concretely than the previous analyses, this suggests that greater exposure to socially-oriented theological currents increases the likelihood that a cleric will address and work for local concerns. Indeed, of the total of eighteen with unique training experiences, thirteen (72 percent) reported some local-level activism. For those with only the standard training and experiences nine out of twenty-nine (31 percent) reported some level of activity. The most active of all the clergy are those with foreign training, closely followed by expatriates.

In sum then, attention to religious factors helps us to comprehend the variances we witness in the clergy's local-level activism. Either personal reference or general exposure to religious themes stressing the need for socio-political engagement on the part of the church disposed a cleric to greater political activity in favor of local concerns.

Distinct religious ideas appear to be an important impetus to clerical efforts to improve the quality of political life for citizens at the grassroots. This in and of itself is an important finding in our larger effort to understand the factors informing the behavior of the clergy as part of civil society.

Thinking about Constraints on Activism

Attention to both institutional and religious factors provides some important insights on the factors which motivate or facilitate clergy activism. At the same time, however, this represents only half of the issue under investigation. And importantly, the analysis also provides important clues about the constraints on the clergy's propensity to embrace and work for political concerns in their communities. These pertain specifically to the impact of social influences on the clergy.

On one hand, as we have seen, Malawian clergy in the hierarchical Catholic Church are more active than their counterparts from the decentralized Presbyterian Church, despite the fact that the leader of the Blantyre Synod of the CCAP is more visibly active in politics and more encouraging of prophetic activities by the clergy. In the Malawian context then, it appears that institutional designs that hold the clergy accountable to central authority rather than the congregation are more conducive to clergy activism. The question which follows concerns why closer connection to the local environment hinders the propensity of the clergy to act or speak out on behalf of grassroots political interests.

On the other hand, we have seen that religious ideas motivate clergy activism. However, further probing suggests that the religious ideas which inspire activism do not

take root among the local clergy absent fairly peculiar circumstances. This is evident when we explore the relationship between the individual mission orientations of the clergy and their previous training experiences. Somewhat unsurprisingly, expatriate and foreign-educated clergy are disproportionately more likely to express socially-oriented mission conceptions. Table 6-6 below depicts this.

Table 6-6: Mission Orientation by Exposure to Socially-Oriented Theologies

Mission Orientation: Stress on Social Themes:	<u>Training and Educational Experiences:</u>				Total
	Standard	HR Conference	Foreign- Educated	Expatriate	
None	25	6	2	0	33 (70%)
Moderate	4	---	2	5	11 (23.6%)
High	---	1	1	1	3 (6.4%)
Total	29 (61.7%)	7 (15%)	5 (12%)	6 (11%)	47 (100%)

Wilcoxin test z values:

Standard training vs. HR Conference: -.166 (.808)

Standard training vs expatriate: -4.23 (.000)

Standard training vs foreign educated: -2.45 (.014)

The findings alert us to an important dynamic which has implications for the clergy's political activities. We know that the clergy who express socially-oriented mission conceptions are more active than others. However, we now also have evidence that adoption of such mission orientations hinges on being somewhat disconnected from the Malawian context. Obviously, this is true of expatriate clergy. But it is also true of

those with foreign education. The latter obtain experiences and perspectives on ministry quite unlike those of the average cleric.

The flip side of this is that average rank and file Malawian clergyman is unlikely to adopt a role orientation which emphasizes attention to social or temporal issues. This is true even for those who have attended human rights conferences. Local experiences do not appear to stimulate activist oriented theologies among the clergy. Why then is this the case?

In short, there is suggestive evidence that the more a cleric is integrated (both cognitively and socially) with the discourses and practices of the local environment, the less the likelihood that they will undertake activity on behalf of local political concerns. Proximity to or embeddedness in the local social environment appear to constrain clergy propensity for activism. Thus when answering the question of why we do not see greater activism on the part of the clergy, we must devote attention to the social influences on their outlooks and behavior. The following section takes up this issue in detail

Social Influences and the Limits to Clergy Activism

As indicated in the previous chapter, there are considerable limits in the extent of overall clergy activism. This is evident not only in the fact that twenty-five of forty-seven clergy report no efforts on behalf of local interests, but also by the limits and inconsistencies which characterize even those clergy who report low to moderate levels of activity. In this respect, their role in promoting meaningful changes in local-level political conditions appears marginal at best. What then accounts for these limits?

Several explanations could be put forward, all of which no doubt illuminate some important reasons for the limited clergy activity on behalf of local concerns. As I will argue, however, to fully comprehend this issue we need to devote attention to the clergy's relationship to the social environment. Social influences on the clergy's outlook and behaviors significantly constrain their propensity to engage in local-level activism. Before exploring this issue in more detail, I briefly explain why institutional or religious explanations come up short.

As to institutional factors, one could reasonably argue that the limits of clergy activism are merely a reflection of the nature of churches as primarily religious organizations. Owing to their essential character, churches are not supposed to be engaged in efforts to work for social change. Instead, institutional preservation and the pursuit of fundamentally "religious" goals are the logical focus of clerical activities. In this sense, the relative inaction of the clergy (and of the churches more generally) reflects a return to normalcy on the part of the institution. The activism only a few years prior is understood not in terms as a shift in church objectives or understandings of mission, but as a necessary, and essentially short-term institutional adaptation to a changes within the larger socio-political context.

To be sure, there is no small amount of credence to this view. As I have indicated, conventional institutional issues--e.g. church building or intensifying the faith of Christians--tend to capture the lion's share of emphasis when church leaders and the clergy discuss their priorities. However, there are shortcomings in assuming that such essential institutional logics explain the lack of clergy activism. Three issues in present themselves in particular.

For one, as indicated in Chapter 4, the current institutional context of these churches is in some ways supportive of clergy activism. Indeed, some church leaders have called for activism on the part of the clergy. There is also a "progressive" component to these churches (especially the Catholic Church) which calls for greater clerical engagement with the political world. Finally, even mainstream currents in the institutional discourses stress issues such as human rights or justice and peace as fundamentally Christian objectives. Despite their character as fundamentally religious organizations, the theme of ecclesiastical engagement with the social world is still resonant in these churches.

Moreover, such an institutionalist perspective oversimplifies the character of churches. In particular, it denies the possibility for clergy and other sectors of the church to have different conceptions of their proper role in society. As research indicates, different sectors of churches can have alternative understandings of their role and different priorities for engagement with the social world. (Mainwaring 1986). The question that emerges is why there are not more perspectives within Malawi's churches which break from the larger institutional pattern to emphasize social concerns over conventional issues.

Finally, we have already seen that the clergy do not conform to a uniform pattern of behaviors. This suggests that despite the essentially religious character of these institutions, there is still room for autonomous activity by the clergy. Again then, emphasizing the "essential character" of these institutions does not unlock the mystery of limited clergy activism.

It could also be argued that religious factors are the central reason why Malawi's clergy to not undertake greater activism. Most clergy have not been exposed to religious discourses which encourage socio-political involvement on behalf of local interests. Beyond this, most clergy do not personally hold understandings of mission which direct them to engage social concerns. However, even though this is the case, we need to query why such religious ideas do not emerge or circulate more significantly in the Malawian context.

The critical issue then concerns how social influences impact clergy behavior. As I will argue, constraints on clergy activism are found in the their relationship to and embeddedness in the larger social environment. This is true in two respects. The first pertains to the character of religious ideas which emerge and circulate in the Malawian context. The second pertains to the character of the local clergy as social and economic actors.

That religious ideas reflect the social environment is a fairly standard proposition which is well elaborated in many studies (Laitin 1978; Taussig 1980; Comaroff 1985). As regards the Malawian context, it needs to be recognized that the socio-political environment is not conducive to religious ideas that encourage clergy activism. This helps us understand why those clergy without unique training and education experiences were less likely to express socially-oriented conceptions of mission, let alone engage in local activism.

At the most basic level, socio-political dynamics in Malawi mitigate against the emergence of a type of discourse similar to liberation theology in Latin America. In the latter situation, stark socio-economic divides, manifest exploitation, and repression

provided fertile terrain for ideas calling for clerical efforts on behalf of the marginalized. To be sure, horizontal class divisions are apparent to both observers and citizens of Malawi. However, the relationship between powerful and powerless is less one of exploitation and repression, than one of clientelism, or for the patronless, outright neglect. Moreover, political and social organization remains highly vertical. Ethno-regional factionalism frames both the discourse and practice of politics in Malawi's new democracy. At times, this spills over into conflicts between partisan supporters at the grassroots.

In turn, the nature of socio-political divisions shapes how the clergy interpret and address "political" issues. Consider again their earlier described responses to the question about the types of political issues they raised in their preaching. Though some clergy did focus on local issues or encourage grassroots participation, still more centered on the problems of partisan divisions in society and the threats to the church imposed by party politics. Equally important, during these discussions, many clergy emphasized that it was *because* of factional divisions that they did not raise any political issues. Witness the comments of this minister:

The biggest political problem in this country is division; we even see it in the church. There are some Christians who belong to MCP, others to UDF. And people don't understand the meaning of democracy. So they may not like the people in power just because they are in a different party from the one they support. And this will cause problems in the future because people will just dismiss and disregard those who are in a different party.¹⁴

Importantly, where this cleric has taken political action it has been to advise politically active elders that they must love each other as Christians, not be divided by partisan

¹⁴ Interview, April 2, 1996.

affiliations. Other issues, such as his perceptions of corruption within the local political leadership go unaddressed.

This suggests that emerging clergy discourses are informed more by perceived needs for social harmony, rather than justice or empowerment. Indeed, from the perspective of some local clergy, to address issues of justice or empowerment would appear strangely out of place given what they see as the more fundamental "problems" confronting the society. There is no obvious oppressor and citizen involvement in "politics" is seen as a source of community disruption, not a solution to local problems.

To be sure, the nature of this discourse is also quite reflective of the temporal context during which the research was conducted. As indicated, during the period of transition, both the clergy and church leaders were quite prone to emphasize issues of justice and empowerment both in church and in public. In so doing, they drew on progressive or "people-oriented" currents of thought within Christian theology. This made sense when the primary lines of conflict were between "society" and the Malawi Congress Party and where issues such as repression and injustice struck a ready chord at the grassroots. In the post-authoritarian context, not only have the lines of political conflict shifted, but the manifest salience of political issues at the local level has diminished relative to the transition period.

At a deeper level, other religious discourses which take root and circulate in Malawi's social milieu, though highly political, lead the clergy initially away from conscious engagement in the political affairs of their community. In some cases, these

discourses have more of an analgesic character, than a prophetic or empowering one.¹⁵ An instructive example is provided by a self-proclaimed "pentecostal" minister within the Presbyterian Church. The "pentecostals" and "born-again" are among the more visible religious movements to recently emerge in Malawi.

Reverend Chingwe has lived and worked in a rural parish since graduating from theological college. His own religious background has always been that of mainstream Presbyterianism, though he has actively participated in revivals sponsored by pentecostal movements from outside of Malawi. His religiosity reflects as much his own appropriation and reworking of pentecostal themes, as it does the instructions he received prior to ordination. The reference points for his ministry are grounded in stark conceptualizations of ultimate designs and his role as a servant of God. In his own words:

As a servant of God, I have to overcome all difficulties and see that the people will receive salvation ...So my number one priority here is to preach the word of God, especially stressing salvation .. When I preach, my example is to tell them, 'you are on a trip. Where are we going to end up? Is it Paradise or Gehena (Hell)?'¹⁶

Most importantly, his stark views are themselves linked to the social world which surrounds him. Specifically, his religious discourse is more comprehensible when we account for the difficulties and impossibilities he and many Malawians encounter in their

¹⁵ The notion of "analgesic" borrows from Eckstein's (1991) discussion of "frustrated" patterns of political thought and action among powerless and marginalized communities.

¹⁶ Interview, May 10, 1996.

daily lives. AIDS, a fraying social fabric, general declines in living standards, and other hardships provide fertile terrain to inform his religious perspective and approach to ministry. His own comments include references to the world he experiences on a daily basis: "Are we really lifting up the cross? It's high time. When deaths are happening almost every day. One of these days Jesus will come to take his promised people. Are we ready?" Or alternatively when he discusses declines in security since the onset of multi-party politics, "Look around these days, the devil is blinding us and we need to open our eyes."

As we might expect, his conscious political involvement is limited or non-existent. Like others in the area, he "knows" that the local MP pocketed poverty alleviation funds designated for the constituency. He, like others, privately condemns the MP and government for corruption and general neglect of the area. But his awareness of these issues does not generate a public condemnation. His politics is filtered through a religious view which mitigates efforts to challenge such acts. Indeed, emergent social and political issues are not conceived of in terms of justice or injustice, but as evidence of Satan's designs on earth. In his own words, "Multi-party politics? It's just another hell in Malawi." Politics--single or multi-party--with its attendant divisiveness, corruptions and duplicities, represents evil. As such, it is consciously avoided in favor of a stress on changing personal behavior and, in his own words, "looking to heaven".¹⁷

¹⁷ See Wood (1994) for a similar discussion of the impact of "evangelical" beliefs on political action. It should be added that it is fallacious to overgeneralize or essentialize the political implications of such beliefs. As Ruth Marshall (1995) has argued, the strict guidelines for social behavior within the Pentecostal discourse may be applied in a prophetic critique of the state.

To be sure, this case is not representative of all the clergy who rank as inactive. But it nonetheless indicates how religious views and the social environment operate in a dialectical fashion. When we consider the status of the clergy as part of civil society, we need to realize that their political views are shaped and guided by religious discourses which make sense and resonate in a certain social context. As the above cases suggests, the harsh day to day realities of the social world may be more conducive to religious ideas that turn away from local social activism, than those that stress justice, democracy, or human rights. In this respect, that local clergy are less active than foreign-educated or expatriates is not that surprising. Indeed, similar trends were noted by one scholar addressing the political activities of clergy in Guatemala:

The native priests rarely involve themselves in reform programs because they are often inured to the miserable conditions under which many of the Guatemalans live, and their familiarity with the usual road of Latin American politics tends to make them consider the situation to be almost permanent. *They therefore leave efforts toward change to the more idealistic, though naive foreign clergy.* (Tortolani 1973: 411. Emphasis mine.)

The social influences which constrain clergy activism involve more than simply the religious ideas which emerge from the Malawian context, however. The second issue to consider concerns the clergy's embeddedness in larger social dynamics and processes. In this respect, it needs to be kept in mind that although the clergy have one foot in churches, they also have one foot in the social world. Their priorities, concerns, and relations as economic and social actors may actually work against their taking on an activist role in their communities. This can be understood on a number of levels.

Recall, for instance, our finding about Presbyterian clergy being much less active on behalf of local concerns than their Catholic counterparts. Much of this can be

understood by devoting attention to the peculiar circumstances affecting the well-being of Presbyterian clergy. As I noted above, owing to the decentralized nature of their church, local Presbyterian clergy manage their churches in cooperation with a body of local elders. In the Catholic situation, though parish councils exist and function, more control rests with the priest who derives his authority from the universal church. Perhaps more importantly, Presbyterian ministers are dependent on local congregations for support. This involves not only salary, but also transport, loans, and other benefits. Catholic clergy receive the bulk of their salary and support from the diocesan headquarters. It should be added that in most cases, the standard of living for Catholic clergy is much higher than that of Presbyterian clergy.

Presbyterian clergy thus depend on local elders for both their own economic sustenance and more generally for effective management of the local churches. Moreover, they are more economically vulnerable than their Catholic counterparts. For these reasons, they are much more focused on maintaining amicable relations with powerful local interests who sit on church councils and, by extension, provide their means of survival and relative comfort. Indeed, in some, cases, clergy fall into clientelistic relationships with local party leaders, state officials, and estate owners who sit on church councils. That this would quiet the former's challenges to local abuses of power and corruption is quite self-evident.

This process can of course work in very subtle ways as well. Several clergy located on large sugar or tea estates were privately quite open about the injustices and squalid living conditions which befell workers. Yet in their public discourse they were silent on these issues. Basic needs for survival and comfort meant that personal priorities

lay in maintaining amiable ties with the local management of the enterprises who provided a consistent supply of benefits. In one particularly memorable example, a minister recounted numerous concerns which surrounded the conditions of workers on a large sugar estate. Workers lived in hastily constructed mud hovels. Poor sewage systems had led to outbreaks of blood diarrhea and the deaths of many children. Yet in his contact with the local managers, many of whom were part of his church council, the issue was never raised. Nor had he ever had contact with representatives of the local worker's organization. He did, however, visit the management to ask for improvements to his own house. Another minister added that he consciously avoided having estate workers on his session (council) because they could not provide the support he needed. A desirable session member has influence and resources. The voice of the marginalized thus fails to obtain an outlet in the church, further limiting the potential for local clergy activism on their behalf.

Attention to such economic concerns also helps us to understand clergy behavior on a more general level. In particular, the limits in clergy activism become more comprehensible when we consider their status as individuals engaged in processes of class formation and consolidation. That the clergy, especially Catholic priests, occupy a privileged place within the social structure is quite evident. Educational status and material security provide obvious initial benchmarks which set them apart from most Malawians. The status is however also evident in lifestyles. Clergy in urban settings can be found drinking in the same watering holes as political elites or playing tennis in expensive sports clubs. Others reflect the patterns of excessive and opulent indulgence to which Mbembe (1992) refers in his discussion of divisions in post-colonial society.

Finally, clergy, as Bayart (1993) reminds, are part of the institutions through which classes are made and remade in African societies. Being a representative of the church entails opportunities to elaborate positions of relative comfort and prestige. This involves the possibility to obtain education, advance in the administrative hierarchy of the churches, and also tap into critical resources, many of which come from overseas.

This class character of the clergy, in turn, has specific implications for their political outlooks and activities. To understand this one needs to have a sense of the pressures which accompany the social position of the clergy. Primary among these are the demands on the clergy to extend the benefits of their own position to kin and family members--many of whom are desperately poor. This dynamic has of course been noted by other authors accounting for practices at the level of the state (Hyden 1983; Ekeh 1978). Many clergy were privately very open about their obligations to provide secondary school fees, iron roofs, credit, and agricultural supplies to expectant relatives. An equally important set of pressures involves needs to consolidate or maintain class status with its attendant benefits and lifestyles. In the context of structural adjustment and declining purchasing power, this consolidation is very difficult. Finally, there are pressures to extend and elaborate privilege. For some clergy, desires for material and social advancement are very real.

The extension of these pressures is that economic issues occupy, and can even colonize, the private concerns of many Malawian clergy. Yet these private concerns infiltrate the discourses and practices of the clerical sphere. This in turn affects their emerging political role.

For instance, within the dioceses of the Catholic Church, debates over distributional issues have predominant status, often guiding the collective efforts and orientations of the clergy. Since Malawi's democratic changes, clergy in three dioceses have issued written challenges to Bishops about nepotism and favoritism in the distribution of various opportunities and resources in the church. In these instances, the pastoral, let alone social, agenda of the church does not emerge as a central issue of discussion. Indeed, the most vociferous challenges to the episcopate on pastoral or social issues in the last twenty years have come from foreign-educated individuals, not collective groups of clergy. In the current era then, the agenda for social action competes not only with more traditional or conventional Catholic priorities (church-building, intensifying the faith, etc) but also with the economic concerns of the clergy. That a discourse on socially-oriented ministries is not more salient among local clergy is more comprehensible in this light. The primary debates in the church are about who gets what, not about the church's role in addressing social issues.

Moreover, the economic concerns of the clergy lead some to engage in private business ventures--often facilitated by clerical access to resources (transport, credit) designated for other ends. In some cases these ventures become paramount, leaving minimal time to devote to even conventional pastoral work. Even assuming there were some inclination to work for community issues, such efforts would likely fall by the wayside. Indeed, attention to business ventures limits the capacity of certain clergy to have a sense of the central issues in their communities. One Presbyterian minister, for instance, spent four out of six work days, running a timber business far removed from his congregation. Another Catholic priest devoted the bulk of his energies to his small

livestock and poultry businesses, the proceeds which went to support his own habits and pay for the school fees of relatives.

Equally notable, but perhaps more troubling, is the near inexhaustible informal transcript of rumors which suggest that certain clergy have engaged in their own surreptitious practices. Parish furniture is hawked, relief maize is sold, and church funds disappear; all of this to support prostitutes, drinking habits, or lavish lifestyles. All too frequently, one heard stories of this nature--from the laity, from expatriates, from other clergy, and even in the press. In this respect, activities of the clergy mirror the neopatrimonialism which has characterized practices at the level of the state in post-colonial Africa. That this raises the specter of an uncivic civil society is quiet clear. More immediately, questions emerge about the capacity of corrupt clergy to challenge similar issues in their own communities.

Importantly, in taking this line of argument about the economic concerns and practices of the clergy, I do not mean to suggest that the majority are disingenuous in their role as servants of the church or the larger body of faithful. Most are no doubt very committed to routine pastoral work. But, at the very least, it needs to be recognized that when it comes time to address issues other than salvation, sacraments, or church administration, the social concerns of the faithful obtain a relatively negligible status when compared to "this worldly" concerns of the clergy themselves. Many local clergy are simply focused on their own projects--be they private businesses, efforts to get "outside" for education, or moving up the administrative hierarchy. As such, the likelihood that they will begin to question the role of the church in addressing social problems is fairly minimal. The impetus for "radicalizing" or simply changing the

predominant clerical approach to social problems emerges from external actors or foreign-educated clergy who have different ideas about what the church is called to do.

Moreover, the primacy of such concerns are more comprehensible as we recall the type of society in which the clergy are a part. Where economic scarcity is the norm, it makes sense that the clergy would place a high emphasis on their own and their families' well-being. Added to this, the ministry and priesthood, is viewed by many in Malawi as a one of the few possible routes to economic security and comfort. Some clergy were in fact very critical about colleagues who had entered the church for the "wrong" reasons; or alternatively, of those who since ordination had become more focused on the material opportunities associated with their situation, rather than the requirements of their calling. That clerical practices involve both holy and human pursuits becomes more understandable in this light.

At an even deeper level, the social position of the clergy links some to a particular normative dispensation. In particular, this entails acceptance of how the powerful have historically behaved and consolidated their status. The point was driven home during follow-up discussions with one Catholic priest who ranked as "moderate" in terms of his local activities.

Father Biya lives and works in the same community as Reverend Chingwe, the pentecostal Presbyterian described above. Unlike Reverend Chingwe, Father Biya reports that he has preached about local issues and that he has made contact with public officials on behalf of people in the area. However, like Chingwe, he is fully "aware" that the local MP used poverty alleviation monies for his own ends. He is equally aware that the local MP neglects the area. And, like Reverend Chingwe, he does nothing about this.

His reasons are quite different however. Simply put, Father Biya sees little wrong with the actions of the MP, who is also his friend. When asked about the MP's non-presence, Biya responds: "Well if I were him I would not come around either. Every time people see you they are going to ask for something. He should just stay in Blantyre (the urban center)." He continues with reference to the MP's alleged pocketing of poverty alleviation money: "The thing is people just complain because they did not see how the money was distributed. And of course, the MP has to keep something for himself." At other points he mentions candidly, "people expect corruption, it's everywhere."

It should be added such a perspective was not peculiar to Father Biya. In other interviews, when asked about local-level injustices, certain ministers and priests would recount stories of small scale corruption or general neglect (as had been reported to them by parishioners), but dismiss the issues as unimportant. Some made reference to fertilizer and relief maize being unequally distributed. One priest recounted, "if one chief takes three or four bags of fertilizer when he should only have one, that really isn't much." In this respect, the clergy do not work for change the social order, because they themselves mirror the dominant values of the very same social context.

In short then, when we look at the social influences on the clergy we begin to realize why their status as part of civil society is problematic. The clergy are very much part of society, and their emerging political role cannot be understood in isolation of this very simple fact. Religious ideas which emerge from their social context do not call for their activism on behalf of local concerns. Moreover, their values, relations, and priorities as socio-economic actors further mitigate their propensity to undertake efforts to improve political conditions in their local communities.

Conclusion

The critical issue is what the above findings tell us about the character of churches as part of civil society in Malawi, both now and in the future. At the descriptive level we have seen that the efforts by the clergy to improve local political life are fairly limited. Analytically, we have accounted for these limits by emphasizing that social influences are primary hindrance to the clergy taking on more activist roles in their communities. Is there then any prospect for a more extensive clerical efforts to improve the quality of democracy for the average citizen?

On the positive side, we see that religious ideas do matter. Clergy who hold or who have been exposed to ideas which emphasize the need for church interventions on behalf of humanity's temporal problems are more likely than others to undertake efforts to address socio-political concerns in their communities. In turn, if such socially-oriented themes become a more integral aspect of clerical conceptions of mission, we might expect greater levels of activism from the clergy--both in terms of seeking to increase the awareness and efficacy of local citizens and in attempting to increase state responsiveness to grassroots needs. Efforts by ecclesiastical leaders to instill such conceptions during the process of priestly and ministerial formation might therefore help to inspire greater clerical interventions on behalf of local-level concerns.

It needs to be recognized however, that such efforts will necessarily confront a set of social influences on the clergy's behavior; and these are relatively immutable to change. The socio-political context in which the clergy are situated does little to inspire religious ideas which emphasize the need for socio-political change. Moreover, the relations and priorities of the clergy as socio-economic actors direct their attention to

more basic concerns associated with their and their own families' survival. Somewhat ironically then, because the clergy are part of Malawian society, their propensity to serve the prophetic or empowering functions of local civil society are relatively limited

As actors then, the status of local churches as part of civil society, as conceived in the functionalist sense, will remain somewhat problematic. At the top ecclesiastical leaders may undertake important activities which allow for the consolidation of democracy. Moreover, disparate sectors within the churches may work for important political changes at the level of society. But the overall pattern of ecclesiastical practices at the grassroots will likely shy away from efforts to improve the quality of democracy for average citizens. Churches--more specifically their organizational representatives on the ground--are simply too embedded in social processes which work against their taking on activist roles.

This point is somewhat akin those about the state during the 1980s. In the early days of African independence, it was hoped by many that the state would serve as the leading actor in the development process.¹⁸ Yet, these hopes were dashed by virtue the simple fact that the state was penetrated by societal influences which undermined its capacity to do so. Whether conceived in terms of the "affective" dimensions which infiltrated the administrative and public sector, or the class pursuits of political elites who looted and left an empty shell of the state, the basic point was quite similar.¹⁹ The state was embedded in social processes or captured by societal interests. As such it could not be leading actor in the development process.

¹⁸ See Montgomery and Siffin, 1966.

¹⁹ See Hyden 1973, 1983; Joseph 1987, or Marenin 1986.

Now the hope is that the institutions of civil society will be the leading actors in creating a more civic and accountable political life. But the hopes for this occurring at the deeper levels of society are undermined by the social influences on those very same institutions of civil society. As we have seen, local clergy are more reflections of the social environment, than they are agents for changing that environment. This sobering point clouds any suggestion that the banner of democratic deepening will be carried by churches.

We turn, then, away from the churches as actors and focus instead on their role as socializing institutions. Here the emphasis is not on what the churches *do* in their local communities, but on what the average citizen *takes* from his or her experience in church. For as is well known, the churches impact on society is witnessed as much in their latent influence on the habits and practices of the faithful. It is to this issue we turn in the next section of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 7

THE SOCIALIZING EFFECT OF THE CCAP AND CATHOLIC CHURCH: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

To this point, the study has focused on the churches as political actors. The analysis has explored the political behavior of the clergy, with the specific aim of illuminating the factors which inform their activities (or non-activities) on behalf of local-level political concerns. In this second part of the study, the research focus shifts. Here, the analysis of the CCAP and Catholic Church concentrates on what might generally be called their “socializing” effect at the grassroots. In this respect, the churches are treated not as actors, but as institutions which can shape politically relevant habits and practices in society. The key issue concerns whether and why participation in these churches has any impact on the capacities and willingnesses of local citizens to embrace outlooks and undertake behaviors which enrich the quality of local-level political life. Political changes in Malawi have presented novel opportunities for citizens to participate in politics, express their views, and organize to pursue their interests. How do the churches facilitate or impede these processes? Are there differences between the CCAP and Catholic Church? If so, why?

At the level of practical research, the effort turns from the clergy to the larger body of faithful. The following four chapters draw on micro-level research conducted in a rural community in southern Malawi. Employing varied methodological techniques,

the research sought to explore the relationship between citizens' experiences in churches and their perceptions of and activities in the socio-political world which surrounds them. My specific aim was to examine the role of these churches in enhancing the organizational activities and political efficacy of local citizens. In this chapter, I outline the basic theoretical and methodological issues which informed the conduct of the research as well as the interpretation of the results.

Theoretical Frameworks and Perspectives

As is well argued in the larger literature on democratization, the contribution which the organizations of civil society make to political life has different dimensions. On one hand, it involves the specific acts by civil society's representatives on the ground. Challenging authoritarian tendencies from the state, advocating for greater state responsiveness for marginalized concerns, raising public awareness, or consciously working to empower local citizens--these are examples of specific types of behaviors through which representatives of civil society can engage and support the process of democratization.

However, as the literature stresses, the impact of civil society organizations on political life is realized in other ways. This concerns, more precisely, the role that these organizations play in shaping the societal norms, habits and practices which inform political life. The institutions of civil society obtain significance in this respect because they provide experiences and transmit cultural messages which shape citizens'

relationships to and activities in the political world.¹ In the ideal situation, especially as put forward in much of the “functionalist” literature, institutions within civil society have the effect of facilitating the emergence and consolidation of norms and behaviors which are supportive of democratization processes.²

To be sure, the potentially supportive functions of civil society organizations are varied in this regard. On one level, it involves their role in shaping the cultural underpinnings of larger social relations. Putnam (1993), and his classical predecessor Tocqueville, for example, stress the importance of organizations for facilitating the growth of “social capital” and “habits of cooperation” among citizens. These attributes allow for the growth of associational life, decrease dependence on central authorities, and help to engender a larger normative milieu where common interest is placed above personal gain. Diamond’s (1994) exposition points out the importance of civil society organizations for the development of “democratic attributes, such as tolerance, moderation, a willingness to compromise, and respect for opposing viewpoints”(6). Views similar to both Diamond’s and Putnam’s are offered in policy-oriented

¹ As the reader will recognize, couching the question of civil society in this manner hearkens back to other literature which stresses the relationship between “institutions” and “culture.” This includes March and Olsen’s (1984) discussion of the organizational factors in political life and Berger and Neuhaus’ (1977) perspectives on the importance of the “mediating structures” which perform “value-generating” functions in the polity.

² One irony of this theme in the literature is that certain scholars have raised concerns about the anti-democratic character of religious political involvement. Some, for example, emphasize that religious passion is associated with forms of extremism and intolerance which undermine the development of civil society. Such a theme is also resonant within various perspectives on modernization which view religion as a vestige of the primordial orientations which can undermine democratic development (Pye 1966; Anderson et al. 1974).

perspectives on “democracy/governance” programs (USAID 1994; Landel-Mills 1992; Payne 1992) and discussions of democratic consolidation in Africa (Harbeson 1994; Chazan 1992) and Eastern and Central Europe (Sandi 1992).

On another level, the ideal impact of civil society organizations concerns their influence on more expressly “political” habits among citizens. Here, the emphasis concerns less their effect on how individuals relate to one another in society, than on how individuals relate to and participate in the political process. One dimension of this is that the organizations of civil society provide avenues and arenas for citizens to organize and articulate their interest (Diamond 1994; Tripp 1994). In this respect, they offer a potential basis for collective action and provide a “public sphere” where citizens can raise and discuss social issues. Another dimension is that civil society organizations provide sets of experiences which empower citizens or increase their efficacy in the political process. From the functionalist perspective, participation in organizational life is inherently valuable because it generates civic skills and provides individuals with a sense of their own capacity to shape and act in the world which surrounds them. The outcomes are higher levels and more civic forms of participation and interest articulation from the citizenry. These are critical manifestations of a democratic political culture and key steps in insuring state responsiveness to citizen needs (Calhoun 1993; Lipset 1994; Sandi 1992).

This study builds on these perspectives when exploring the “socializing effect” of the CCAP and Catholic Church on grassroots citizens in Malawi. That is, the literature on civil society’s ideal role informs the questions I explore regarding these churches. Recalling, however, that this study examines how the churches improve the quality of

local-level political life, the research specifically targets their role in shaping two fairly distinct processes. Both of these are critical to the deepening of democratic habits and insuring greater state responsiveness to local needs. First, the project assesses the extent to which the local-level CCAP and Catholic churches help to promote the social cooperation and organizational involvement so critical to the further development of civil society. In this respect the research examines the relationship between church participation and the capacity of local citizens to develop and participate in local forms of collective organization. Second, the project examines the contribution of these churches to the political efficacy of local citizens. Here the focus of the inquiry is on the extent to which church participation encourages local citizens to engage in forms of political participation and voice their interests. In the first respect, attention is devoted to citizen activities in social organizations generally. In the second, the project target levels of citizen involvement in more manifestly political affairs.

The issue for research thus finds inspiration and topical salience in the larger body of literature exploring the role of civil society in democratization processes. The inquiry, however, finds analytical and theoretical guidance from the corpus of work dealing with religion and politics.³ Drawing from this literature, we obtain five insights

³ To be sure, the issue of how religion and social life are linked is one of the longest standing concerns within the social sciences, occupying no small amount of efforts of thinkers such as Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Freud. Given the scope and purpose of this dissertation, I do not intend to engage the grand debates to which the contending perspectives give rise. Nonetheless, it should be stated that as this project focuses (at least initially) on the impact of religious experience on social behavior and attitudes, it draws more on the Weberian tradition. The other approaches might reverse the arrow of causality and instead begin with the impact of the social world on religious practices and values. However, as is already evident by my research on the clergy, this too is a theme of the study.

which guide the inquiry. The specific implications for both the practical research process and the theoretical analyses are discussed subsequent to my elaboration of these five insights.

Insight 1. At the most basic and obvious level, a large body of research indicates that religious institutions can play an important part in socializing the political values and behavior of citizens.

The literature here is quite extensive. Suffice it to say that studies have revealed that religion can have a decisive impact on matters as diverse as voting behavior in industrial democracies⁴, political value orientations and identities (Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988), and the onset and character of social protest (Ileto 1977; Blicke, Ruplack and, Schulze 1984). The list could easily be extended. More explicit references and elaborations follow in the sections below.

Insight 2. More importantly, religious institutions can encourage the development of social habits which facilitate the growth of associational life and the political empowerment of the citizenry.

The most recent statement on this is offered in Robert Putnam's (1993) exploration of why democratic institutions have been more effective in northern Italy than in southern Italy. The key, he maintains, is the presence of a "civic community" in the former which underpins governing institutions. In accounting for the absence of civic

⁴ Wald (1982) offers a review of the literature dealing with religion's impact on partisan alignments and voting behavior. See pp. 218-234 in particular.

spirit and social capital in the regions of southern Italy, Putnam stresses the negative impact of the “clericalism” which characterizes the traditional Catholic experience in Italy. Hierarchical structures within the church and attendant emphases of obedience and deference to priestly authority had the historical effect of reinforcing vertical relations of power and curtailing citizen action and association in public life. By contrast the liberal Catholicism and congregational religions which developed in northern Italy were characterized by active lay initiative, fellowship and governance (1993: 107 and 127). The subsequent development of horizontal bonds of cooperation, associational life and civic spirit owes significantly to these characteristics of religious life.

The supportive role of congregational as opposed to hierarchical forms of religion has also been highlighted by other writers. Some researchers have emphasized that Protestantism has historically given rise to more democratic and participatory cultures (Lipset 1994; Bollen 1979). As Lipset writes, “(P)rotestants ... have been less authoritarian, more congregational, participatory, and individualistic”(5). This theme is echoed by writers who have placed the hope for the emergence a democratic culture in Latin America on the growing presence of Protestantism (see Stoll 1990; Martin 1989).

Much of the heretofore mentioned research, however, only offers very general thematic pointers to guide the analysis. More systematic work in contemporary political situations provides specific insights into the role of religious institutions in shaping political participation, empowerment, and collective organization among citizens. The key issue is how churches can play this role. This brings us to our third point.

Insight 3 *The mechanisms through which religious institutions shape important habits and behaviors are both “objective” and “subjective” in nature.*

“Objective” mechanisms refer to experiential knowledge and skills acquired by participants in church life. “Subjective” captures the cultural values and emotional attributes which emerge through religious participation. To be sure, as both my own research and that reviewed below testify, the distinctions between these mechanisms are not always neat and tidy. Nonetheless, they offer initial markers from which to think about how churches shape important micro- and individual-level political phenomena.

Attention to the objective mechanisms is especially notable in the literature which explores the relationship between religious institutions and political behavior in the United States. Studies indicate that higher levels of religious participation encourage higher levels of political activity. In explaining this, researchers have stressed that involvement in non-political organizations facilitates both greater efficacy and heightened awareness among individuals. In turn, this encourages more active engagement in the political world (Houghland and Christenson 1983; Peterson 1992). Peterson (1992) refers to this as the “spillover effect” of religious organizations. Another viewpoint summarizes, “church participants can generalize the skills developed by religious participation to secular activities as well” (Houghland and Christenson 1983: 407). In this respect, the role of churches in facilitating participation is akin to that of any other social organization (educational, social, economic) which stimulate the acquisition of civic skills, interest, and public awareness. The logical extension is that churches can encourage political participation regardless of their religious messages or the emotional experience of the individual within the religious organization.

The most refined explication of this theme is offered in Verba, Schlozman, Brady, and Nie's (1993) study of political participation. In accounting for different rates of participation among whites, Latinos and African-Americans in the United States, they highlight the impact of different religious denominations. While accepting that education and income are important determinants of participation, they stress that participation also hinges on the degree to which individuals have obtained critical "civic skills." These skills can be obtained by individuals in "non-political" organizations, particularly churches. These might include organizational leadership, public speaking, working with other people, or finding information. Different denominations, however, provide different distributions of these politically relevant resources and experiences. Lower rates of Latino participation, especially when compared to African Americans, are explained by the fact Latinos are largely Catholic. Opportunities to obtain and exercise civic skills are notably fewer in the Catholic Church when compared to Protestant denominations. These basic differences in skill opportunities offered in these churches are more important for political participation than the types of political messages which differentiate the churches.

As I will elaborate below, this focus on the objective mechanisms directs our attention to what I described earlier as the "institutional factors" influencing the churches' contribution to local-level political life. Churches are relevant not for the types of religious experiences they provide, but for how they offer opportunities to obtain civic skills and resources. Different sorts of institutional arrangements within churches--especially those pertaining to distributions of authority--will disseminate such skill opportunities differently.

An alternative emphasis draws attention to the more subjective mechanisms which allow religious institutions to influence political behavior and outlooks. Here, scholars focus on factors such as the content of religious ideas and emotional or cultural experiences within church. Importantly for this study, this kind of approach is consistent with (though not identical to) close consideration of the “religious factors” informing the local-level contribution of the churches.

The focus on such subjective processes takes on varied manifestations. Frederick Harris (1994), for instance, draws attention to the “psychological resources” provided by religion. As his research on African-Americans demonstrates, internal religiosity can facilitate feelings of self-esteem and political interest. The latter are themselves important influences on voting and collective action. Other research dealing with the American context draws attention to the nature of political and religious ideas and discourses as influences. Allison Calhoun-Brown (1996), for instance, stresses that the nature of political discourse within churches can shape political activity (see also Wood 1994). Wald, Owen, and Hill’s (1990) work indicates that degree of moral conservatism found in churches shapes levels of individual political conservatism as well as the level of political cohesion in churches.

The emphasis on the subjective influence of religious participation is clearly highlighted in the literature on religion and politics in Latin America. Here, the central issue concerns the potential importance of religion for the political cultures and practices which are evolving out of authoritarian experiences. In his study of religious influence on local life in Brazil, for example, Rowan Ireland (1991) focuses on the content of religious ideas and experiences as causal influences on political perception and action. Within

different religious traditions at the grassroots, he stresses, there are elements of different political cultures and “models of citizenship.” These, in turn shape how local actors define public as opposed to private issues, whether they accept “hegemonic ideas”, and how they respond to claims of legitimacy from those at the top of the Brazilian political system.

The issue of religion’s impact on political culture is also resonant in the assessments of changes in Latin American Catholicism associated with Liberation Theology and the implementation of Basic Christian Communities (BCCs). Writers have both hoped and hypothesized that the novel participatory forms of religious experience and attention to social problems found within BCCs will lead to shifts in cultures of authoritarianism and passivity. This is especially important as the latter have forestalled empowerment, development, and the growth of civil society at the grassroots.⁵ Offering a positive assessment of such changes in Catholicism, Krischke’s (1991) research on communities in Brazil details “molecular processes” through which BCCs have altered political habits and practices among citizens. New forms of political initiative and democratic styles of governance within grassroots organizations were associated with experiences within the Catholic religious communities.

The most notable exploration of how of religious changes can influence grassroots political life is provided by Daniel Levine (1992). Moreover, both the objective and subjective mechanisms of religious influence are present in his study. Levine focuses on the processes through which changes in the messages and practices within Latin American Catholicism have led to changes in political cultures at the grassroots. Novel

⁵ See Smith 1994 for an overview of these issues.

practices and experiences in worship, he argues, imply changes in how people relate to each other, how they understand authority, and how they see their own role in changing the social circumstances which surround them. The result can be new and enhanced forms of activism, political voice, and social organization, all of which speak to changes in the basic relations of power between the principal actors and structures of political life and citizens at the local level.

An important theme for Levine is that neither simple theological doctrine nor levels of participation per se are the mechanisms through which religion shapes political life. Doctrine becomes reworked at local levels. Moreover, participation comes in different forms, both authoritarian and empowering. Instead, one needs to focus on the experiences of actors within religious organizations.⁶ Here, we see that religious messages are reinterpreted to fit local circumstances and that tangible experiences in church at once shape objective capabilities as well as subjective understandings of “self” in relation to the world. The impacts are often difficult to detect, but nonetheless significant for their long term implications.⁷

In short, the impact of religious institutions on important political habits is realized through objective and subjective mechanisms. Attention to these two dynamics

⁶ In this respect, the research takes a decidedly “phenomenological” approach, in that it emphasizes the meaning and understanding of religion as practiced and experienced by the subjects of the study. In this sense the analysis begins with religious concepts and world views, seeking to discern their impact on wider forms of social thought and action. See Williams and Fuentes (1998), Stewart and Mickunas (1974, cited in Williams and Fuentes 1998), Levine (1981:12) for a fuller elaboration.

⁷ See also Mainwaring and Levine 1989.

returns us to our larger discussion of the institutional and religious factors which shape the contribution of the churches to local-level political life.

Insight 4. All of this said, it needs to be remembered that religious institutions can undermine the empowerment of the grassroots or have no impact at all on patterns of political behavior and culture. The nature of impact may depend on how institutions interact with the larger social environment.

Religion's impact on the local level may not in all cases lead to greater political efficacy and civic participation, and may in fact hinder such processes. Many scholars emphasize that religion's otherworldly focus provides escape from social or political problems. Fatton (1992), for example, suggests that churches in Africa represent more a "domain of hopeful resignation" than potential sources of empowerment.⁸ This theme is also resonant in earlier studies on the role of religion among African-Americans and immigrant populations in the United States (Harris 1994). Rather than empower such marginal groups, religion provided "an otherworldly solace for temporal ills" encouraging apathy and resignation.⁹ Research by Langton (1986) in Peru, was similarly pessimistic about the role of religion. His work indicates that Catholicism in Peru actually hindered the propensity of workers to engage in social protest.

⁸ One shortcoming of this perspective, however, is that Fatton offers only anecdotal evidence to support his claims--and at that, based on other sources, not his own research.

⁹ Harris (1994) refers to the work of Lane (1959) and Frazier (1974) as representative of this genre.

Much the same, a large body of research offers evidence of the limited socializing impact of religious institutions on political values and identities. Davis (1992), for example, after finding that Catholic workers are more disposed to support the ruling party in Mexico, also found no indications that Catholics held different social and political values from others in the population. Similarly, Bruneau and Hewitt 's (1989) research on members of Basic Christian Communities indicated that the church's progressive stances on social issues did not lead to differences in the political attitudes of practicing as opposed to non-practicing Catholics (see also Drogus 1993). Hewitt (1990) further contends that the ability of the BCCs to inculcate more progressive attitudes and social action decreases over time. Finally, in one of the few attempts to explore the socializing effect of churches in Africa, David Laitin (1986), also finds that religion's impact is limited. In particular, Muslims and Christians in Nigeria do not differ in fundamental political values.

All of this research indicates that although religious institutions may have the potential to shape political values and behavior, whether that influence is realized is an entirely different issue. In accounting for this, research suggests that the presence and strength of other social influences will help to determine the extent to which religious institutions play an influential role. Wald, Owen, and Hill (1990) for example, indicate that the ability of churches to socialize political values hinges on factors such as the social identities of the faithful and the extent to which churchgoers are isolated from alternative influences on their political perspectives (e.g. newspapers). Laitin's (1986) research highlights that the salience of other factors in the social environment--such as ethnicity--will determine the impact of religious institutions on political culture. At a general level,

religious institutions will work themselves variously into different social environments and their socializing effect may depend on how they interact with values and processes within those contexts.¹⁰ As the reader will note, this returns us to the important issue of how social factors or the larger social context shape the contribution of churches to local-level political life.

Insight 5: *There is need for caution in suggesting that non-findings imply non-impact.*

This last insight is more methodological than analytical in character. In particular, it needs to be stressed that many of these studies which fail to find the impact of religion are very ambitious in character. This is very true of those researchers who seek to explore the impact of religious institutions on key values and identities. Some evaluate the influence of religion through attitudinal responses to questions which tap into larger concepts such as “trust”, “authority”, and “social progressiveness.” In other cases, researchers have sought to locate some level of congruence between the outlooks of Christians and larger themes within churches, such as the social position of ecclesiastical leaders or certain theological currents (Bruneau and Hewitt 1989; Drogus 1993).

There is nothing wrong with pursuing a study along these lines. However, the conclusions should be tempered by an acknowledgment that non-findings do not necessarily imply non-impact. Three issues present themselves. For one, values and identities represent but one dimension of political impact. Thus while studies may indicate the absence of a basis for collective identity and action (Laitin 1986; Hewitt 1990) or socio-political progressiveness (Bruneau and Hewitt 1989), there may still be

¹⁰ This point is also explored by Levine (1992).

more subtle ways in which religion influences how individuals think and act politically. Indeed, some of the very same research which stresses non-impact on values and attitudes, offers evidence that religion does influence behavior (Drogus 1993). Secondly, it needs to be remembered that religious ideas are reworked at local levels. Thus non-findings may merely indicate the lack of cooperation between social scientific perceptions of political values and the actual values which resonate and make sense at the grassroots. Third, because no “general” impact is discerned, this does not imply that there may be specific individual cases where religious values and experiences are shaping important political action. In some instances, these individual cases can serve as progenitors for larger changes in patterns of political behavior and culture (Levine 1992; Mainwaring and Levine 1989).

Implications

Each of these five insights contain specific implications for how the project explored the socializing effect of the CCAP and Catholic Church in our research site. These involve the types of hypotheses which framed the inquiry, the manner in which the research was conducted, the interpretation of the results, and evaluations of evidence.

Initial Hypotheses

At the most basic level, the project has been guided by two hypotheses about the socializing effect of these churches. First, it seemed reasonable to hypothesize that there would be differences between the Catholic Church and the CCAP in the extent to which they encouraged organizational activities or political efficacy among citizens. Building

on heretofore mentioned research (and opinions) it was tentatively hypothesized that Protestants would demonstrate higher levels of organizational activities and political efficacy than their Catholic counterparts. Because Protestantism is in principle less hierarchical, more individualistic, and more participatory in nature, it runs counter to authoritarian and submissive cultures, and also provides more opportunities to obtain critical civic skills.

This said, there was, nonetheless, reason for caution in posing such a hypothesis too starkly. As has been indicated, "reformed" Catholicism is equally likely to stimulate political empowerment and associational activity. In Malawi, small congregational types of arrangements exist within the Catholic Church in the form of Small Christian Communities (SCCs), an ecclesiastical innovation which has taken root since the mid-1970s. More details of these are provided below. Suffice it to say that many of the "civic resources" thought to be present within Protestant churches could also be located in these Catholic settings.

A second hypothesis to guide the research was that higher levels of participation in these churches would encourage higher levels of political and associational activity. That is, active members of any church would show a greater propensity than non-active church members or non-affiliates to participate in and make demands on the political system, and engage in forms of associational life. This again seemed logical given the research findings discussed above. As Levine (1992) advises, however, participation comes in different forms--in some cases directed and structured, rather than interactive and facilitative. This insight tempered the hypothesis about the positive impact of religious participation.

Conduct of Inquiry

Given the above comments, there was good reason to enter the research process with some level of caution in “testing” these hypotheses. The hypotheses served as guides for the study, but did not represent the totality of the issues for exploration. The project proceeded cognizant that: (1) denominational differences may be less stark than put forward in the literature; (2) participation per se may not facilitate socio-political engagement; (3) the actual religious experience and its impact on political behavior will be mediated by other social influences.

The immediate implication for the project was that the study was conducted in as much of an exploratory and ethnographic manner as a strict data-collection exercise. Attention was devoted to the specific types of experiences which individuals obtained in these churches,¹¹ to the manner in which local social influences were present in the churches, and to the general patterns of politically relevant interactions and behaviors of local-level citizens. In the end, this allowed for a more nuanced interpretations of the findings. Critical “why” questions could be answered more easily because time was spent patiently observing the details of religious and social life, rather than aggressively testing hypotheses about participation and denomination. This brings us to the next point.

Interpretations

As mentioned at the outset, the goals of this part of the project are not to simply obtain an empirical depiction of the socializing effect of the local-level Catholic and

¹¹ This follows Laitin’s (1986) and Ireland’s (1991) emphases on focusing on “religion in use” or the “practical religion of the converted” rather than denominational traditions or theological doctrines.

Presbyterian churches, but to obtain a theoretical understanding of the relationship between local-level religious life and the political habits and practices of average citizens. If we find that churches do contribute to political efficacy or organizational activities, what are the mechanisms which allow them to do so? Much the same, if the findings indicate that churches do not encourage such outcomes, what are the factors that undermine their ability to positively contribute to local-level political life?

In seeking to answer these kinds of questions, I return to the three key variables or factors which guide the larger dissertation. As I emphasized both at the outset of the study, and in the chapters on the clergy, the contribution of the churches to local-level political life is shaped by religious, social, and institutional factors. This is no less true when we explore the socializing effect of these churches. What is particularly important is how these factors relate to the in-church experiences of local citizens.

Many of the issues raised in the above review of literature relate directly to our interpretive efforts in this regard. Consider how the important objective mechanisms are related to particular institutional factors. The institutional design of churches will shape the extent to which they offer opportunities to acquire the civic skills and resources which can enhance political participation among citizens. As such, should we find that churches contribute to political participation or voice among citizens, we might do well to consider how the relative distribution of skill-development opportunities facilitated or encouraged such processes.

Similarly, however, such institutional factors will also mediate the relative salience of a second factor which can actually curtail the extent of the churches contribution to local political life. Here I refer to social factors. As some of the

heretofore mentioned research advises, the salience of larger social influences can undermine the extent to which churches can effectively socialize and shape the behavior of the faithful. One extension of this is that where churches are found to have a limited impact on citizens, it does us well to consider how such social influences are at work. It follows moreover, that, owing to institutional factors, certain churches will do a better job of insulating the religious experience from such social influences. A very similar point was made in previous chapters concerning the local clergy--the less insulated the clergy were from their local environment, the less the likelihood that they would embrace and work for local concerns. And as we will see in some of the later chapters, local control also implies that local power dynamics replicate themselves in the church. In turn, this shapes the in-church experiences of the faithful. In this respect, both institutional and social factors obtain causal significance.

Finally, the role of religious factors informing behavior must be part of any interpretation of our findings. This is especially true where we observe higher levels of political efficacy or participation from one denomination as opposed to another. The literature suggests that religious experiences can be sources of emotional and psychological empowerment-- the subjective mechanisms behind church influence. This can be a key step in bringing historically disenfranchised and alienated actors (such as poor Malawians) to higher levels of political activity and voice. In these cases, political efficacy hinges not only on having access to civic skills and resources (a.k.a. objective mechanisms), but also undoing patterns of psycho-cultural disempowerment. Religious experiences can be a key source of the subjective empowerment so important to bringing about heightened levels of political efficacy at the grassroots.

Evaluation of evidence

This last point returns us to some of the methodological issues raised under Insight 5 above. This concerns how we evaluate the evidence that churches are shaping local-level political habits and behaviors. Specifically, we need to be cautious in using statistical significance as the ultimate arbiter of research results. Non-findings needed to be treated with caution as to whether they implied non-impact. The project needed to hold out for the possibility that the impact of these churches on social life was not realized in a general--statistically significant--sense, but on a few particular cases who were significant precisely because they represented alternatives to the patterns of disempowerment which characterize local-level Malawi. Rules of evidence needed to be treated flexibly.

Study Design

To restate, this part of project explores the socializing effect of the CCAP and Catholic Church in Malawi on local-level citizens. On one hand, this involves their impact on the organizational capacities of average citizens, more specifically their propensity to and develop and participate in forms of collective organization and associational life. On the other, it concerns the extent to which they encourage political efficacy among citizens, as witnessed in higher levels of political participation and the voicing of interests among local citizens. The project explores both whether churches contribute to these processes and why they do (or do not) do so.

In its original incarnation, the project called for research in two communities, one urban, one rural. This was intended to provide a perspective on the socializing effect of

these churches on local citizens across two different contexts. While data collection efforts were undertaken in an urban location, the results which I will discuss in this study are limited to the rural site where research was conducted over a three month period. There are three reasons for omitting the urban site from the analysis in the dissertation.

First, owing to limits of time and resources, the amount of data collected in the urban site was much smaller. Second, the data which was collected yielded no discernable evidence of the impact of these churches on either collective organization or forms of political participation and/or voice. However, this does not allow us to conclude that the churches were having no impact. The problem lay in the lack of activity in terms of the dependent variables under investigation. Somewhat surprisingly, in the urban site the research team found no evidence of collective organization at all. In addition, there were very few outlets for political participation or voice. As we will see this stands in contrast to the rural site. The lack of activity in the urban site made it very difficult to discern the impact of these churches--there was simply very little variance on the dependent variables.

Finally, the urban site carried a much more heterogenous population--ethnically, socio-economically, and in terms of education. This made it much more difficult to conduct small sample quantitative research. In particular, unlike the rural site, there were few possibilities for comparisons across like cases. This was further compounded by the two issues raised above.

The local level research discussed in the following four chapters is thus confined to that conducted in one rural community in southern Malawi.¹² To be sure, this necessarily limits the generalizability of the study. However, it is neither the claim nor goal of this study to present findings which offer a representative view of the impact of these churches on citizens across the country or even in southern Malawi. Instead, the research is most insightful in terms of the “why” questions it probes about the local-level CCAP and Catholic churches. For example, why is it that we find discernable evidence that the Catholic Church empowers women to a greater extent than the Presbyterian churches? Why is the impact of the churches on local political life limited in a more general sense? These kinds of questions bring us to consider how social, institutional, and religious factors are at work to shape the role of these churches at the grassroots.

Understanding how the churches influence local citizens or why they do not is central to comprehending their status as part of civil society. Indeed, in presenting the range of variables which shape the impact of these churches on local citizens this study makes important contributions which can inform other studies of churches in similar contexts.

¹² The criteria for selecting the community as a research site was as follows. First, the CCAP and Catholic Church were the predominant religious institutions in the area. Second, the community had substantial proportions of those who represented the “poor” in Malawian society--those who might benefit the most from greater participation and empowerment. Third, in Mzimba, there were high levels of social interaction outside of the village setting. In much of Malawi, social life is highly confined to the village or even kinship level, and immediate interactions with the formal political system are relatively limited. In these areas I felt it would be difficult to trace the impact of religion on political activity and associational life. Mzimba, on the other hand, was slightly different in this respect, offering greater opportunities to explore socio-political life.

In the rural research site, hereafter called Mzimba (a pseudonym), I resided with a research team for two and one half months. It should be noted that research extended beyond my own stay however, as assistants continued data collection in my absence. In addition, I conducted repeated visits to Mzimba both before and after the period I was residing there. While my stay was short by ethnographic standards, it nonetheless allowed me to interact in the community and learn greater specific details about the issues under exploration. Moreover, the time spent in the community was critical to the process of accessing and obtaining reliable data. My extended presence in the area allowed citizens to become familiar with me and understand why I was asking so many questions. This was critical in a society where, in the words of the human rights group Africa Watch (1990), "silence ruled" only five years prior.

In the Mzimba area, I began my research by familiarizing myself with the local political and social milieu. This entailed conversations with leading community informants such as business men, clergy, state administrative officials who frequented the area or actually resided there, and also average citizens who availed themselves to me. Additionally, I participated in and attended numerous religious services and functions--both of the CCAP and Catholic Church, but on occasion other religious groups as well. This included regular Sunday services, meetings of small Christian communities and prayer groups, choir practices, meeting of women's guilds, and church council meetings. I continued this process throughout the entire research period. This allowed insight into the different types of experiences which people obtained in these churches. I provide details of the social, political, and religious milieu in the chapter which follows (Chapter 8).

Building on my knowledge of Mzimba and its religious life, I then followed three specific steps to more rigorously assess the impact of these churches on social life. First, I explored local social movements and collective organizations. Here, my specific aim was to discern the impact of churches on the arenas of associational life in these communities. Specifically, I assessed whether the churches provided a basis for their formation and whether activity in these groups was associated in any way with religious participation. In this sense, I was able to obtain an empirical understanding of the relationship between the churches and the organizational activities of local citizens. The findings are discussed in Chapter 9.

The second step entailed interviews with members of the Catholic Church, the CCAP, and individuals unaffiliated with these denominations. This allowed exploration of more specific propositions about the impact of religious participation and denomination on emerging manifestations of political efficacy. The data from these interviews was then statistically tabulated to probe various hypothesized relationships. The findings are detailed in Chapter 10.

Finally, I employed open-ended qualitative interviews with persons found to be socially and politically active. This helped to gauge the extent to which their own church experiences shaped their behavior in the political sphere. Some of the important dynamics behind the statistical relationships come to the surface through these interviews. This allowed me to speak to many of the theoretical and interpretive issues which I raised above. Chapter 11 is devoted to these issues.

CHAPTER 8

RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE IN MZIMBA

This chapter discusses social, political, and religious life in a rural community with the pseudonym Mzimba. This serves as the necessary backdrop to contextualize the more systematic inquiry of whether and how local-level Catholic and Presbyterian churches affect the organizational capacities and political efficacy of local-level citizens. The most crucial component of this backdrop concerns the attention to the different characteristics of religious practices in the Presbyterian and Catholic churches of Mzimba.

Socio-Political Life in Mzimba

Mzimba was well-suited to the project for a number of reasons. Most important was that the area diverged from the typical patterns which characterize much of rural life in Malawi. In many rural areas, social life does not extend outside of the kinship unit in the village and formal contact with the state is rare. Such was not the case in Mzimba. The area was characterized by high levels of market activity and relatively high levels of social interactions outside of the village setting. Moreover, there were numerous points of contact between local citizens and the formal political system. In these respects, while the area was not wholly “typical” of rural Malawi, it did afford opportunities to observe citizen political behavior—a fundamental task of the study.

The research area is best thought of as a large circle with a diameter of seven kilometers. At the center of the circle was a large rural trading center with shops, motels, beer halls, and vegetable, fish, and firewood vendors. Two days per week were designated market days in Mzimba. At this time, the otherwise quiet trading center would come alive with hundreds of vendors from outside of the area selling clothing, produce, electronic goods, meat, and various finished household items. Mzimba was renowned for its market activity.

As one departed the market area, the social setting changed to small peasant households roughly organized into villages. The villages consisted of two to four hundred persons scattered over a given area. The primary activity of most of the villagers was agriculture. Virtually all households were involved in the production of maize, Malawi's staple crop. Oftentimes this was inter-cropped with pigeon peas--a critical source of protein. As the size of agricultural holding increased, households would also engage in the production of other crops. Primary among these was tobacco.

Tobacco had been promoted in the area both by the Ministry of Agriculture and foreign donors as a crop which rural Malawians could easily produce to increase their cash income. Many simply grew tobacco and sold it to intermediate buyers who had sellers licences and thus access to the tobacco auction floors in Blantyre, some 80 km away. Others, however, were organized into tobacco clubs. Clubs were a vehicle promoted by the government and donors through which rural farmers could combine their efforts to secure credit, fertilizer, and transport. In addition, all clubs were granted sellers licences which meant that they had direct access to the auction floors without having to

sell through intermediate buyers. All clubs were granted quotas specifying the amount of tobacco they were allowed to sell at the auction floors.

Though some clubs in the area had existed since the early 1990s, the new government of Bakili Muluzi took initiatives to increase the production of tobacco among rural Malawians. For this reason, both government and donors had encouraged and facilitated the formation of clubs. The majority of clubs in Mzimba were no more than two years old. To this it should be added that none could be viewed as true "bottom-up" initiatives. To successfully grow and market tobacco a farmer had to be in club. Moreover, forming and working with clubs had increasingly come to be viewed as the *raison d'être* of the local Ministry of Agriculture officials.

It is important to note that apart from these clubs, other forms of manifest associational life were relatively limited. Churches, discussed below, represented one exception. In addition, local market vendors had established a small vendor's association, which served the function of managing affairs and conflicts among vendors and advocating for their needs with state officials. This is discussed more fully in the following chapter. Other than this, social organization remained confined to kinship ties within the village.

Authority in the village lay with the headman or "chief." Generally these were older men who obtained their status on the basis of lineage. Although their exact political role was ambiguous, a few important generalizations can be made. First, headmen were active in ceremonial functions such as funerals. In addition, it was they who oversaw the allocation of land in the village. Finally, and most importantly for this research, the chief was one locus of contact between state and political officials and the

local villagers. As such, he or she would organize village meetings when so designated by state representatives seeking to communicate with local villagers. Some chiefs also undertook the role of communicating local problems to political and administrative officials.

Both the ruling UDF (United Democratic Front) party and the opposition MCP (Malawi Congress Party) were active in the Mzimba area, though for the most part it was considered a stronghold of the former. UDF branches were organized down to the village level, in some ways a reflection of the high levels of political organization which preceded the referendum and the general elections. The local village party branches were designated to hold regular meetings. However, these had become infrequent and haphazard since the general elections. Many simply did not know what to do with the party when elections were not being contested. This said, the local party members were seen by some villagers as persons to whom they could bring their political complaints or--reflecting the predominant role of the party during the Banda days--even call on to mediate disputes between people. To this it should be added that the ranking UDF figure in the larger area, the party's constituency chairman, resided near the trading center. Nominally, he was one of the individuals who was responsible for communicating community concerns to the Member of Parliament.

The area was also occasionally visited by the Member of Parliament. As villagers would often complain however, "he sure does not come here as often as he did during the campaign." His occasional visits, often with district development officers, did little to ameliorate the general feeling that the MP was not "findable" (a direct translation from Chichewa).

The direct presence of the state was apparent in Mzimba in a number of ways. A secondary school operated near the Catholic parish, while a primary school was maintained near the largest Presbyterian church. A small health clinic was run in a cooperative effort between the Catholic Sister's of Mercy and the Ministry of Health. The state was also responsible for the maintenance of boreholes and roads. Added to this, there were two important state officials residing in the Mzimba area. The first was the agricultural extension officer who, as I have indicated, spent most of his time in dealings with tobacco clubs. The second was a community development officer. Community development officers were part of the national administrative structure which extended from the Office of President and Cabinet down to Malawi's various local districts. Projects, both donor and state sponsored were coordinated through the primary district administrative offices, in this case located some twenty-five miles away. The job of community development officers was, on one hand, to oversee and coordinate the implementation of various projects from above (such as donor-sponsored child-spacing or adult literacy programs). In addition, the community development officer was designated to liaise with the larger local community. This involved arranging village or community meetings when representatives of ministries (e.g. education, health, or water) came to discuss projects with local citizens and coordinating local-level contributions to development projects (e.g. building school blocks).

As is the condition of life in most of rural Malawi, the vast majority of people in the Mzimba area were living in poverty. For the majority of people, basic concerns involved surviving from one month to the next. This needs to be recognized first and foremost as the chief condition of most of the villagers in the research area. Some had

more wealth than others, but most were at the margins of existence. As is noted about Africa (and the globe more generally), poverty often had a feminine face.

Beyond the obvious and oft stated problems of poverty and even hunger which confronted many in the Mzimba area, there were a number of other problems which complicated the daily life of villagers. A chief concern which many communicated was that of access to water. Boreholes were in place in various parts of the research area, but there were not enough to reach the needs of the burgeoning population. In addition, it was widely felt that health services were inadequate. The local clinic was understaffed and lacked basic medicines. Crime had also increased since the onset of multi-party politics, leading many villagers to call for a greater police presence in the area. Finally, many complained about the failure of the government to provide basic necessities such as relief maize or free fertilizer.

Tobacco farmers confronted an additional set of issues which pertained to the role of the state in their enterprise. For one, they were in routine contact with the extension officer, who was designated to assist them. At another level, the farmers required decent roads in order to market their goods and obtain necessary inputs. They also depended on the state for credit and market access. Loans from the state finance corporation carried annual interest rates of 56 percent, leading many to complain that they simply could not break even. Still other clubs faced problems of diminishing quotas. Some felt--with good reason--that tobacco sales quotas were distributed on a political basis.¹

¹ One of the more intriguing stories among farmers in the area was that many of the clubs in the area had lost sales quotas to clubs from the neighboring constituency. The Member of Parliament from the neighboring constituency, also a government minister, had organized the clubs and provided generous quotas on a political basis. The Mzimba area clubs in turn had sales quotas deducted.

The complaints of villagers thus also centered on abuses of power and injustices which characterized their interactions with the political and state elite. To be sure, many of these complaints were not as openly vocalized as others. Nonetheless, repeated contacts with local citizens increased the amount which they disclosed. One of the most often repeated stories was that the local Member of Parliament had used "poverty alleviation" monies, provided by the government for the constituency, to purchase and resell local tobacco for his own aggrandizement. Others claimed that he had distributed the bulk of relief maize to one area of the constituency where his family and political ties were strongest. The other complaint, elaborated above, concerned his general non-presence and neglect of the area.

Still others, most notably women, told stories of abuses they had experienced at the hands of agricultural extension officers. Some who organized themselves to form tobacco clubs were charged extra fees for registration forms, signatures, or a mere audience with the extension officer. Others voiced complaints about headmen or chiefs who granted them land, but then claimed disproportionate shares of their tobacco crop.

There were thus a wide range of issues confronting citizens in the area. However, collective efforts or associational vehicles to deal with the problems were relatively non-existent. Related to this, many villagers remained disempowered. Under the previous regime, their voices could only be articulated in support of the Life President's accomplishments on behalf of the country. Thus the cultural repertoire of how to respond to basic issues and communicate their needs to political officials was relatively underdeveloped. Most felt as though the MP knew about the local problems but he simply did nothing. Still others did not have the sense of efficacy which might bring

them to voice their concerns. One woman commented, "I have never spoken about these problems we face with anybody, I have felt them for a long time but I am too shy to speak about them." Or alternatively, "I just stay here in my home, I do not know what I can do." Beyond this, many simply realized that they lacked power and resources and thus depended on the political officials and state leaders who at times neglected them, and at other times preyed on them. As one woman put it, "what can I do, if we don't cooperate with his demands our club would not get formed."

This then was the general condition of social and political life in the area. The key question is whether or not religious life played any role in helping citizens to deal with the problems which confronted them. Did it facilitate participation in the political system, thereby increasing the possibility of greater responsiveness to local needs. Did it augment the efficacy or empower citizens to break from their "normal" condition of silence and voice their concerns? Did it abet the development of organizational life, thus adding to the growth of civil society at the grassroots? These are the key questions to which the study is assigned and which are systematically explored in the next chapter. Before proceeding to these issues, we must first obtain a sense of religious life in Mzimba.

Religious Life in Mzimba

Catholics and Presbyterians were the predominant religious denominations in the Mzimba area, although significant numbers of other denominations were present as well. Though it is difficult to assess the proportions of the local population that claimed membership in these churches, a review of the denominational distribution in tobacco clubs provides a

rough estimation. Of 105 members of tobacco club members interviewed, 30 percent were Catholic and 24 percent were Presbyterian. Other religious traditions that were represented in these populations included the Church of Christ (13 percent), Islam (4 percent) and numerous other independent churches and smaller Protestant denominations.

In the two sections which follow I offer descriptions of the character of participation and worship in the Presbyterian and Catholic churches in the Mzimba area. In addition to providing a general overview of religious practices in these two denominations, the descriptions highlight specific aspects of the religious experience by which these two denominations can be compared. This includes specific attention to: the nature of religious and social discourse in the worship settings; the nature of participation in church life (both who participates and how); the quality of group interactions; the character of governance, and the particular experience of women in these two denominations.

The Catholic Experience

The research area was serviced by one large Catholic parish situated near the trading center. The two diocesan priests (both Malawians) who resided at the parish were nominally responsible for approximately 14,000 Christians. A full-time catechist aided their work. In addition to the main parish, the priests also maintained four "out-churches," outside of the research area, which they would visit on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Worship services were held twice on Sundays, with a priest always in attendance.

The parish was also organized into 27 Small Christian Communities (SCCs), in Chichewa, *mipakati*.² These were established in the early 1980s as an ecclesiastical innovation which was hoped to intensify the religious experience and deepen the faith of Catholics. Organized on the basis of small villages (larger villages would have two), these *mipakati* would meet either twice per month or weekly. Here, the attendees would read (or simply hear) selections from the Bible, review catechism, and attempt to promote a sense of fellowship. More details of the actual experience within the *mipakati* follow below. Suffice it to say that they represented a key aspect of Catholic worship, though not surpassing the mass in terms of importance.

Added to this, the Catholic parish sponsored a small number of lay organizations. A Church Council, made up of the leaders of the different *mipakati*, met on a quarterly or “as needed” basis. The exact powers of the council were never very clear—at times they seemed to function more as intermediaries between the priests and the faithful, than as an actual decision-making body. More traditional lay groups, such as the Legion of Mary, had fallen into disuse, especially since the inception of the *mipakati*. However, the Catholic Women’s Organization (CWO), open to all the women parish, remained in operation. The women were organized on the same basis as the *mipakati*, by village. All of the women in a given *mipakati* were also by default members of the Catholic Women’s Organization for that particular village. Some of these branches of the CWO, however, were not active. Not every village had regular CWO meetings. In principal, however, the women would meet twice per month to review catechism, pray the rosary, and

² *Mipakati* is the plural form of the word *mpakati* in Chichewa. For purposes of simplification I will continue to use the plural throughout the dissertation.

promote fellowship. At times, the parish also sponsored parish-wide meetings of the CWO and enlisted their help in cleaning the parish or running workshops and special events. Finally, both Sunday schools and choirs met outside of the normal Sunday mass and regular *mipakati* gatherings.

For the average Catholic, the manifest religious experience revolved around the Sunday mass service and the meetings of the *mipakati*. Some women additionally attended the independent meetings of the CWO. Worship at mass is, of course, required of all Catholics. Sunday services were generally well-attended, to the point of overflowing, by hundreds of worshipers. Mass was well-organized with choirs, ushers, and mass-servers facilitating the flow of the service. This high level of organization meant that services were conducted in a predictable manner, without confusion or complication.

The use of choirs, ushers, and mass servers allowed for some level of lay participation in the services. Added to this, readings were usually performed by one or two members of the church and a parish treasurer would make announcements at the end of the service. In general however, the priest occupied the central role, both directing the service and providing the principal religious message through his homily.

The homilies which I witnessed in Mzimba rarely touched on political issues or sought to encourage the faithful's participation in political life. This said, when the primary parish priest was interviewed, he indicated that he had on occasion addressed political issues pertinent to the local citizens. These included raising the issue of the slow completion of a new local market facility and more generally advising Christians that they

should insist that the government be held accountable to campaign promises, such as building more schools and better roads. An excerpt from the interview follows:

I have said several times that they (the government) always say 'we're building schools, we're building bridges.' But we've been waiting for two years. If we want these things, to see them, we have to ask the government, 'why are you promising you are building schools and you wait two years?'³

This noted, in the ten sermons which were witnessed and recorded by the research team, such themes were never addressed. For the most part, sermons touched on issues of family relations or faith and spirituality more generally. Two typical excerpts from homilies follow:

The reading was from the book of Matthew about a non-Israelite woman who had gone to Jesus to seek help for her child. Jesus helped her even though she was not an Israelite. Rev. P told the congregation that they needed to realize that God's mercy knows no boundaries. Some people think that a Moslem will not make it to heaven. That is a great mistake because nobody knows what is inside of a Moslem. In contrast to what we may think, God shows mercy on those who fear him and will reward them accordingly, even if they are Moslems. Even those who we think are not regular worshipers, God can show mercy on them. We do not know what is inside them--sometimes they have greater faith than the regular church-goers. The congregation was then asked about their way of living in their houses and in their *mipakati*. Is it worth God's mercy? God shows no partiality, therefore Christians should not look down on other people. The only thing is to work hard on your faith. God will show mercy to anyone in any church who are doing his will.⁴

Drawing on the parable of the sower, Fr. P told the Christians of a certain farmer who went out to sow seeds in his field. When the morning came, he found that another strange seed had also germinated together with the one he had sown the previous day. The farmer advised his workers to let the seeds germinate together until harvest time. Fr. P explained that God is merciful, loving and kind-hearted, and forgiving. God wishes that the man he created in his own image develop those same characteristics in himself. God will never punish anybody without warning him. An example of Sodom and Gomorrah was given. The priest then said that he and the leaders of the *mipakati* were messengers to warn people of

³ Interview, June 17, 1996.

⁴ August 18, 1996 - Field Notes.

their sins before judgement day. People may wonder why a person who sits next to them behaves so differently. He added that God is allowing the bad people and the good people to pray together in church and in the *mipakati*. The Christians should not judge those who are weak, but should do their best to love them and not follow the example of their bad behavior.⁵

To be sure, these types of homilies carried important messages for the Catholics in attendance at mass. However, at the level of basic intuition, this does not appear to be the type of discourse that would encourage political action or awareness on the part of the faithful.

In addition to mass, the Catholic experience also entailed participation in the *mipakati*. Given the importance of these types of organizational forms--both within the literature and in this study--it is necessary to situate Mzimba's *mipakati* within larger comparative and historical contexts.

In very rough terms Malawi's Small Christian Communities (SCCs) or *mipakati* resemble the Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) which developed in Latin American countries beginning in the 1960s. Both the SCCs and their Latin American cousins, the BCCs, are similar in that they involve small groups of Christians who gather together on a regular basis to read the Bible, discuss matters of common concern, and develop greater fellowship (see Levine 1992: 45). It should be noted, however, that the creation and use of Malawi's SCCs has been guided less by the ideals of progressive Catholicism which characterized some--not all--of the Latin American experience. In the progressive ideal, BCCs represented a stark contrast to the traditional Catholic experience characterized by hierarchical relationships, highly directed participation, and dependence on priestly mediators for interpretation of the Gospel. These BCCs served as arenas where members

⁵ July 21, 1996 - Field Notes.

of the church could come together, read the gospel and interpret it to suit the circumstances of their daily life. In other cases, they provided bases for collective action to solve community problems. As I have stressed, the literature on Latin American Catholicism has devoted considerable attention to the importance of BCCs in shaping and transforming political culture. New forms of sociability and novel forms of participation in religious life generate changes in people's approaches to "this-worldly" problems. Herein lies the potential of these organizations to facilitate empowerment and unprecedented forms of political activity at the grassroots.

In the Malawian context, church leaders have historically shied away from the socially-transformative ideal expressed in other parts of the globe. If implemented at all, most Small Christian Communities have been viewed as tools to intensify religious experiences and provide support for the clergy and other lay groups. On one hand, this is reflective of the Catholic hierarchy's approaches and emphases since independence. Sacramental, church-strengthening, and "faith-deepening" imperatives have been viewed as paramount. Moreover, the Catholic leadership has adopted a very institutional, as opposed to people-centered, view of authority in the church.⁶ On the other hand, the political climate of the country after independence was not exactly encouraging of progressive innovations within the church. Indeed, oral narratives about the Catholic Church's history in Malawi indicate that early attempts by missionaries to establish Small Christian Communities were met with resistance by local party officials. In the early 1970s, one missionary was allegedly deported and several catechists imprisoned when a

⁶ Levine (1981: 139) helps to highlight the important distinction between "ecclesiastical" (hierarchical) and "ecclesial" (assembly-based) approaches to the Catholic Church.

local party cadre claimed the Catholics were setting up an alternative political organization. While this did not prevent the establishment of SCCs in some dioceses, it does put into perspective the type of political climate in which they were planted.

The diocese of Zomba, in which Mzimba is located, began to implement SCCs in the early 1980s. This was earlier than many other dioceses where Bishops viewed the SCCs with some level of suspicion. Moreover, since Malawi's political changes, the diocese had been receptive to a team of progressive clergy--headed by a Belgian missionary--providing parish-level workshops to assist the development of the SCCs. In addition to addressing basic organizational issues, the team also made efforts, at a lesser level, to direct SCC orientations towards more social concerns. Posters used in workshops carry messages such as "*mipakati* help to promote justice." These types of workshops had been conducted with leaders of the *mipakati* in Mzimba Parish.

The above discussion provides the necessary background within which to describe the *mipakati* experience in Mzimba. During my field stay, my research assistant and I were regular attendees at four *mipakati*. Generally, these would meet every two weeks, though one met on a weekly basis. The *mipakati* were comprised of 40 to 70 members, not counting children.⁷ Meetings were generally held at a member's domicile--most of the time a hut. The following four composite descriptions from the my and my research assistant's notes help to paint the picture of typical *mipakati* meetings.

I arrived at the scheduled meeting time of 1:00, though the meeting did not actually get underway until 2:45. In addition to about fifteen youth, about ten men and twenty women of various ages were in attendance. All sat in different areas depending on age and gender. We started with a roll call. Then, after going through the beginning prayers (The Lord's Prayer and the Rosary) a song was

⁷ This is larger than most Basic Christian Communities in Latin America.

sung. The basic gist of the song was the glory of the afterlife: "there will be no problems and no sorrows, there will be Jesus, Mary, and Angels."

After this, a younger man read from Romans--something about following the path of Jesus. The chairman then asked for discussion. After a small delay, people did speak, albeit men only. The typical response concerned the immediate behavioral and religious content of the readings, e.g. "those are powerful words, it means that we should not do bad things, that we should follow the footsteps of Jesus." Women were then asked for their contribution, but none offered any comments.

Subsequently, the chairman moved the meeting to announcements and matters of common concern. The first item for discussion concerned the buying of logs to make planks for coffins. This discussion was relatively balanced between men and women--though the chairman and his vice (a man) were the main contributors. The secretary of the *mipakati*, a woman, was relatively outspoken. The *mipakati* was then informed that an AIDS course was being sponsored by the diocese and that they were to send a delegate. Nominations followed, none of which came from the chair and his vice. Finally, the meeting was informed of the need for greater efforts by the membership in helping others in the group who had fallen sick or could not work.

The meeting concluded with a collection. The secretary was responsible for collecting and keeping the money which was raised. After singing a song the meeting ended and we dispersed.

The meeting was attended by ten men of mixed ages. The chairman and the vice chairman (both men) are both in their thirties. In addition, about twenty women and fifteen youths were present. The women ranged in ages from twenty to seventy.

The meeting was preceded by a song from the youth--an upbeat tune with the chorus, "when I die I will go to see my Lord". We took role and started the meeting. The reading for the day came from Matthew. The text was read three times. Thereafter, people repeated the verses which they liked, and concluded with "thanks be to God." Mostly men repeated verses, but one woman and one younger girl also did so.

The chairman then moved to announcements and matters of common concern. During this time Ms. M. reported about her attendance at the diocesan AIDS meeting. She instructed people that they should visit those afflicted with AIDS. In addition, the *mipakati* was to provide some money for firewood to help those with AIDS. After that a few questions were directed at her, some came from women.

The chairman then held up a poster which he received during the *mipakati* training session. The picture showed Christians standing in a circle. He said, "look at this picture and how the people are standing," "we see that the church is everybody, it's not just the men or the big ones. It's also the youth, the women, etc." I was a bit impressed by this, but I was never clear on whether or not it was solely for my benefit.

Finally, there was the collection of pledges to be brought to the parish. The final event was a song by the youth in attendance. The meeting closed and all those in attendance shared locally brewed traditional beer.

In the afternoon we arrived at the *mipakati*. The meeting started about ninety minutes later than scheduled. At the time we started, approximately five men, fifteen women, and twelve youths in attendance. By the end of the meeting, latecomers had increased the total number of men and women. Each group sat in different respective areas of the courtyard in front of the hut. The chairman, a young man aged about 35, opened the meeting. They began with a song and then moved to a prayer, which all in attendance recited. Thereafter, selections from the new testament were read three times. After each reading the meeting chanted in unison, "these are the words of the Lord, thanks be to God." There was then an attempt to get a discussion going. I was impressed that two women spoke up at this time. Most of the discussion related highly individuated and family-centered issues to the reading. This included the need to avoid laziness and the need to be loyal to one's parents. Announcements then followed. Here, the main issues were the necessary pledges of money for the parish, efforts by members of the *mipakati* to set up a funeral fund, and where to hold the next meeting. We dispersed after a collection and a final song.

There was a large gathering on this day. The women's side seemed to have about thirty members, and twelve on the men's side. On the men's side, most of them were young people. We started with a song and then a prayer. The organization was not entirely in the hands of the chairman and treasurer, but anybody was free to suggest anything. Two women read the same passage twice and the Chairman called for a time of silence to meditate the word. He then extended a chance for anyone to interpret the scripture read. Two men only opened their mouths. The women just stayed silent.

We then discussed other matters for the *mipakati*. Much of the talking was done by those holding posts, while others just stayed silent. The men were consulting the women's opinion on many matters. For instance, there was an issue raised of a certain woman who is married to a man who does not come to church, but is a Catholic. They have broken up, but she still comes to church for sacraments. It was decided that some older people should go to consult with the woman and explain the rules of the church to her. The decision to choose which elders was left in the hands of the women.

Several aspects of the experience in the *mipakati* should be noted. First, at a general level, they were managed without direct supervision from parish. The priests only visited the *mipakati* once per year. While a committee of ten members had authority over the

group meetings, most of the routine managerial responsibilities seemed to fall to the chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary. The actual religious content of the meetings was guided by small booklets which advised which readings should be used. Other aspects of worship such as prayers, songs, and the agenda of the meeting were decided upon by the leadership. In addition, during the meetings, members and the leadership both responded to parish initiatives--such as selecting members for diocesan workshops, collecting pledge monies, and creating funeral funds--and addressed issues specific to the particular group. This included mediating conflicts between members or establishing weekly groups of people to visit the sick or help the aged.

A second point involves the leadership positions in the *mipakati*. Although men clearly dominated leadership positions, the role of women was significant. Of twelve *mipakati* for which leadership lists were obtained, four contained no women in positions of authority for the groups as a whole. Among the other eight, women held sixteen out of sixty-five (25 percent) leadership positions. However, it needs to be recognized that within every *mipakati* was a parallel structure of authority for the Catholic Women's Organization. This usually consisted of ten women. Indeed, some *mipakati* (such as the four without women in leadership positions) distinguished between the men leaders and the women leaders. Thus, the women who had positions of leadership in the CWO were responsible for the independent Catholic women's meetings in the particular village. However, these same women also carried some authority within the general *mipakati*, representing the "women's voice" on particular issues which came up for discussion.

Third, the religious discourse within the meetings could hardly be described as the type which might direct Catholics to focus on "this-worldly" concerns. Moreover, while

there were emphases on helping each other, more ambitious attempts to create some forms of collective action to solve common problems--water, poor roads, poor medical facilities--were non-existent. The one area where members did work together was in efforts to prepare for funerals.

Equally notable was the nature of group interactions in the *mipakati*. As indicated, the *mipakati* included a fairly broad spectrum of people. Men and women of all ages sat together with youths when conducting the meetings. It also important to note the fact that both younger men and women obtained leadership positions in the *mipakati*. Malawi has traditionally been described as both a "gerontocratic" and patriarchal society (see van Dijk 1992). The *mipakati* in some respects broke from this pattern, providing a unique model for sociability in Malawian society. Within the *mipakati*, there appeared to be some effort to level stark social boundaries, with the aim of creating a sense of community among Catholics.

Finally, the nature of participation represented a distinguishing feature of the *mipakati*. In the actual worship portions of the meetings, both men and women were allowed--in some cases encouraged--to play a role. As I have indicated, this role may never have involved more than a mere recitation of the reading. Added to this however, was an emphasis on dialogue. One *mipakati* chairman in an urban township described it to me as "it's not to preach, it's to talk to each other." To be sure, many in Mzimba, especially women, eschewed active participation along these lines during the religious component of the meeting. As such, it would strain credulity to describe the *mipakati* as "religion by discussion" in which women are active participants. At the same time, however, at other points in the meetings, women did actively articulate their viewpoints--

especially after the religious aspects of the meeting are completed. Women participated in nominating people for positions, discussing matters of common concern, taking attendance, and actually taking on some leadership roles along with men. These types of experiences were in some ways unique in rural Malawian society.

One final aspect of Catholic worship which should be noted is that of the women's participation in the Catholic Women's Organization. As I mentioned above, all women in the parish were, in principle, members of the CWO. Whether active membership was embraced is a different question. In addition, regular meetings of the CWO did not occur in every villages. Some women's meetings had fallen into disuse, and the women simply attended the *mipakati*. This made observation of such meetings difficult, and in fact only one meeting was attended during the research process.

Where the women did meet, the format was roughly similar to that of the *mipakati*, however, less emphasis was placed on reading and discussing the scripture. For the most part the religious aspects of the meeting centered on singing, reciting prayers, and reviewing the catechism. Like the larger *mipakati* meetings, women also discussed matters of common concern after the religious portion of the gathering. In general, this too represented an important component of the religious experience for Catholic women in Mzimba.

The Presbyterian Experience

There were three Presbyterian churches in the area under research. Two of these had the designation of "congregations," meaning that they were fully independent with their own kirk session (church council) to govern the affairs of the local church. The other church

was designated as a "prayer house" which meant that it was a satellite of another larger church, and that it lacked an independent kirk session. None of these churches had their own minister. The general practice within the CCAP is that ministers have responsibility for a number of rural churches, but reside at the largest congregation. Such was the case in Mzimba. A minister lived at one of the congregations in the research area, but was responsible for conducting services in nine other churches. It should be added that this minister did not have responsibilities at the second of the two congregations in the research area. The congregations had memberships of about 300-400 persons, not counting children. The prayer house had about 150 members.

The hallmark of the Presbyterian system is active participation by the laity--particularly church elders--in both conducting religious services and in managing the affairs of the church. The absence of a full-time minister in many congregations makes this principle a reality in rural Malawi. The congregation is often assigned great responsibilities in making religious worship both possible and efficacious. In contrast to Catholics, rural Malawian Presbyterians build their own churches and minister's houses, donating both their time and their financial resources. To be sure, donations do come from without, but this situation is quite unlike the Catholic experience where the vast majority of resources for the running of the church come from diocesan headquarters and the universal church. Moreover, Presbyterians have greater responsibility than their Catholic counterparts in supporting local ministers. Though ministers obtain stipends from synod headquarters, local congregations are expected to supplement this considerably. The day to day conduct of church life also depends on the laity. Under some direction from ministers, members organize their own Sunday schools and choirs,

and often conduct their own services. As the high point of Presbyterian worship is the communication of the word of God, not the celebration of the Eucharist (as in the Catholic situation), such a situation is both normal and expected.

The backbone of this system are the body of church elders who make up the kirk session. Elders are elected once annually by the larger congregation. In conjunction with the minister, elders have the basic authority to run the church. At the level of practical worship, the elders are also those who conduct services. This is especially true when ministers do not reside on the premises of the congregation. Consider this excerpt from my field notes:

I proceeded to the service at the Mwetuna CCAP. The elders were gathered together in the vestry; they were waiting for the minister to arrive as today was the day he was supposed to come. After ninety minutes of waiting, it was concluded that he was not going to show. Quickly and efficiently, the elders chose readings, hymns and delegated responsibility for who was to do what during the service. The service went smoothly, without complication.⁸

There was no clerical dependence for the elders of this congregation.

Major decisions for the church are made at quarterly meetings of the session. These are always held in the presence of the minister for the congregation--whose nominal role is to advise and moderate the session. In reality, the authority of the minister allows him to direct many of the decisions which are taken. Matters which come up for decision might include how to generate money for building or what plans should be followed for the further development of the parish. During these meetings, the session often also hears cases of Christians accused by the body of some transgression, such as having children out of wedlock or failing to sanctify their marriage in church.

⁸ July 14, 1996 - Field Notes.

The religious experience of the average Presbyterian churchgoer in the Mzimba area revolved around the Sunday services. Women had the additional possibility of belonging to the *mvano*⁹ or Women's Guild. Finally, a select few individuals were also part of the session, with responsibilities for running the church and conducting services.

In the two congregations which were visited, Sunday services were usually attended by about 250 people. The prayer house had a regular attendance of approximately 100 to 150 people. The order of the service followed a consistent pattern. Elders, usually ten to fifteen, would gather in the vestry of the church--with or without the minister--and make decisions as to what the readings were, what hymns were to be sung, and who would preach. They would then sit in front of the congregation to conduct the service. The actual character of Presbyterian services is best captured by these three excerpts from my and my field assistant's notes:

The service was somewhat poorly attended, with about 50 women and 25 men present. In addition to this, a number of youths and small children were in attendance. A well-constructed prayer by a woman elder opened the service. One hymn was then sung, this was followed by two songs by the choirs. Thereafter came the first reading. We then sang another song, and heard the second reading from another man. Announcements then followed. The clerk of the session stressed the importance of people giving money to support sending elders to a seminar being given by the Presbytery in Zomba. He also announced that there was a program to register all the names of the church-goers. Rev. Z. then interjected claiming that it had been brought to his attention that some people had been saying bad things about him--particularly that he was an outsider to the area and therefore not welcome. He added that if this continued, such people would be excommunicated.

Then came the preaching by a church elder. After explaining the scripture, he added that some Christians give away their faith to Satan for worldly desires. He accused mainly those who are fond of knocking on women's doors at night, sneaking around in beer halls, gossiping within the church, etc. He added that Christ had been led away and tempted by the devil for forty days in the desert.

⁹ *Mvano* is both plural and singular.

Just like Christ, Christians should overcome the temptations of the devil and live a righteous life.

Then came the collection. The counting of the collection was done in front of the congregation and elders. It seemed as though there was some mistrust among the elders. Lastly, visitors were introduced. The service ended about 1:00.¹⁰

I entered the vestry with the elders in normal fashion. There ensued a discussion about who was going to preach and do the readings. I ended up with one of the readings. The elders entered and at the front of the church. The service was well attended with a fair number of young men in the pews. All told I counted about 35 men and 60 women in attendance, along with youths and children. After we all sang a hymn, the women's guild choir sang a song. The chorus ran, "though the minister preaches, I do not listen, I am bad and I have sinned." The readings then came, followed by announcements. Most of the announcements concerned members of the congregation who were sick; it was added that these people should be visited by members of the congregation. Thereafter, the clerk reported on his visit with Rev. C to find out why the latter had failed to show up last Sunday. Rev. C's car had broken down that day, but he added that Rev. T would make up for this by showing up on another date. It was added that because Christian's could not help cultivate the field of the minister, they were asked to make extra financial contributions for his support.

The preaching centered on gossip. Christians often speak gossip and this can lead to accusations between friends which cause their downfall. If we listen and believe the evil things that some of our friends tell us then we will collapse. It is more important to just believe in God and the kingdom of God. People laughed at Nehemiah, but this did not lead to his downfall. He continued with his ministry withstanding all the accusations against him. The same applies to us, we must withstand accusations and not make the same against others. This is the key for living peacefully with our friends and seeing the kingdom of God

The service dispersed after the collection and a final song by the youth choir.¹¹

The elders met in the vestry for about 45 minutes prior to the service. Mr. Dziwe a younger man was chosen to preach. The leader of the Sunday school -- one of the church deacons (also a younger man) was designated to do the announcements. About 140-160 adults were in attendance. Three women were also in the vestry but did not speak. We entered the church and began the service with a prayer from one of the male elders. Thereafter the youth choir provided a song, a very well organized delivery with different harmonies, etc.

¹⁰ July 14, 1996 - Field Notes

¹¹ July 28, 1996 - Field Notes

Readings, one by a female elder, the other by a male, then followed. Then came announcements. The congregation was advised about a choir festival and about a joint baptismal class being conducted with another congregation in the area. The members were also advised to contribute monies for the timber which will be used to make coffins for funerals.

The preaching then followed. Just like Abraham and Judah, so do we have sins which can be punished. If a person is full of sins and bad deeds, it shows. But sins come slowly and gradually destroy the spirit. This is what happens when we drink. We must take note that we are children of David. Our speech should not include banter and loud voice like a drunk. But we should speak slowly with good words. We shall see the kingdom of God if we stop sins like drinking.¹²

Several aspects of the Presbyterian religious experience become apparent from the above discussion and descriptions. First, much like the Catholic situation, the nature of discourse within the Presbyterian settings avoided specific attention to local political issues or efforts to encourage participation or empower Christians to take socio-political action. One difference about the Presbyterians was that piety was defined largely in terms of behavior, as opposed to internal faith and spirituality. The emphasis was on the need for individuals to avoid sin. Like Presbyterians elsewhere, those in Mzimba were responsible for their own salvation by virtue of how they behaved in this world.

Second, in running the actual service and in the managing of the church, there was no dependence on clerical mediators. Consistent with their congregationalist structure, the Presbyterians realized a greater role than their Catholic counterparts in managing and administering the church proper. In some situations, however, this self-managing aspect could degenerate into self-mismanagement. In one of the congregations in the research area, members were highly organized, cooperative, and effective in running the affairs of the church. Services generally went off without problems, choirs were prepared and

¹² August 18, 1996 - Field Notes.

well-organized, and management of finances and administrative duties was diligent. The other congregation, however, had a particularly nasty history of disorganization and infighting. Only one year prior to the arrival of the minister, the Women's Guild had fallen apart. Elders accused each other of theft and the use of witchcraft. And many Christians simply departed for other churches. The arrival of the minister solved many of these problems, but managing church affairs remained a difficult issue. The minister did not trust many of the lay elders.

Third, building on this, it was clear that lay participation in the actual service was much greater than in the Catholic situation. Preaching, readings, and announcements were all the responsibility of elders. Added to this, lay participation in administering the church was much greater. But it needs to be emphasized that meaningful participation was confined largely to the elders, deacons, and to a lesser extent, the Women's Guild. The latter are addressed below. As for the elders, there were usually no more than ten to fifteen per congregation. These elders were supported by deacons who have lesser roles, but still participate in meetings and the running of some services. In the first congregation, there were a total of twenty-three elders and deacons. In the second, there were nineteen. Finally, in the prayer house, there were ten elders and deacons

One striking characteristic of the elders was that many of them were quite old, generally ranging from 45 to 65 years of age. This pattern was especially pronounced in the less well-organized of the two congregations and its satellite prayer house. The observations in my research assistant's notes contain the following excerpts:

The kirk session began late in the afternoon. The minister, session-clerk, and vice session clerk sat in front. There were twelve men and four women. Only one

younger man was present. Most of the men were in their old age. Most of the women were in their 50s.¹³

(Describing a combined service with a congregation and two of the prayer houses) There were about thirty *mvano* women, most of whom were well advanced in years. I identified only three young ladies. There were about 26 people among those who had authority from the two prayer houses and the congregation. All were dressed nicely in neckties, jackets, shoes, etc. To my surprise, there was only one young man in the group.¹⁴

His observations corroborated my own. The governing body of elders was made up mostly of older men and a few older women. Some younger men had the status of deacon, but their role was clearly secondary to that of the elders. In the second congregation, there were more younger men active as elders and deacons. However, more older men occupied positions of authority.

As is evident in the accounts as well, most of the persons occupying positions as deacons or elders were men. In the first congregation, five of the twenty-three elders and deacons were women. In the second, four of nineteen elders and deacons were women. In the prayer house, only two women obtained the status of deacon. In total, this represents 21 percent of the leadership positions, compared to about 25 percent in the Catholic *mipakati* which have both men and women in general positions of authority. However, it needs to be remembered that the *mipakati* are smaller than the CCAP churches. This means that the density of leadership positions for women was much greater in the Catholic setting. Out of a group of fifty or sixty people, there might be for example four non-gender-defined leadership positions occupied by women. In the Presbyterian setting, out of three hundred people, there might be four women in non-

¹³ August 3, 1996 - Field Notes.

¹⁴ August 11, 1996 - Field Notes.

gender-defined positions of leadership. Possibilities for having some kind of position of non-gender-defined authority were greater in the Catholic Church.

Not only were the possibilities for leadership different, so too was the nature of authority. In the CCAP many of the women were, contrary to the Catholic situation, "well-advanced in years." Moreover, even for those women with the status of elder or deacon, their actual role in the management of church affairs appeared limited. In the one session attended by the research team, only one woman actually spoke. Much the same, few women played an active role in the vestry meetings prior to services. In sum then, important aspects of church management and much of the substantive participation was confined to relatively small groups consisting of older men. As I will discuss later, much of this is reflective of the decentralized structure of the Presbyterian system, which allows for greater levels of lay influence in deciding issues such as the composition of church governing bodies.

The nature of group interactions in the services is also of relevance. Again, the laity played a greater role than in the Catholic mass. But there was no equivalent to the Catholic effort to foster dialogue through the *mipakati*. The true religious experience in principal occurred through the preaching of the elder. There was no interchange, either in principal or in practice. The religious experience remained highly individuated.

Much of the leveling which was witnessed in the Catholic group interactions was also absent. There were clear divisions among Presbyterians in their level of importance. Seating arrangements in church reflect the authority of the elders. Elders take the Eucharist first, before other members of the congregation who are eligible. Those who are not allowed to take the Eucharist—usually because of some transgression and

subsequent disciplinary action taken by the session--are asked to leave the church during the Eucharist. Thus not only in terms of age and gender, but also in terms of relative importance in church, there were clear divisions among the Presbyterians.

Finally, there were peculiarities to the experience of women in the Presbyterian setting. As I have noted, relatively small proportions of women obtained leadership positions in the church. Even for these women, the quality and degree to which they were able to articulate opinions and exercise skill in the actual management process was an open question. Church services also saw men playing the predominant role. Women may have led prayers or songs, but preaching was relatively rare. The one time such an event did take place was during the Synod's biannual "women's Sunday." Here the women of the congregation put on the entire service--in an obvious role reversal exercise.

The other aspect of women's experience in the Presbyterian church concerns their role in the women's guild or *mvano*. In each of the congregations, approximately twenty-five to thirty women were members of the *mvano*, a smaller number-- about fifteen--were members in the prayer house. At the outset, it is important to recognize that the *mvano* are an exclusive group in the Presbyterian system. Women of the congregation must be nominated and undergo training sessions to become members. At services, the *mvano* wear white shirts and head wraps distinguishing them from the rest of the congregation.

Generally, the *mvano* are designated to play supportive functions for the congregation. This includes feeding and attending to visitors, providing choir services, and also visiting sick or older members of the congregation. In addition, they are expected to serve as models of behavior and religiosity to the rest of the congregation. To this end, they meet on a weekly basis to practice songs, learn Biblical teachings, and

review the expectations upon them. As needed, these meetings are also used to prepare for upcoming feast days or visits. When the *mvano* were not preparing for an important visit, their meetings usually had an attendance of ten to fifteen women.

The meetings in Mzimba were led by an executive leadership team which the *mvano* choose themselves--with a chairwoman, secretary, treasurer, and "committee members." Meetings usually began with a prayer conducted by an individual woman. Thereafter, the content varied. Fairly consistently, a considerable portion of the meetings were devoted to singing songs and reviewing the obligations of being in the *mvano*. The latter were generally expected to be rote memorized by the women. Occasionally, some scripture readings also occurred. The reality that many rural women are illiterate, however, made this less practiced in a place like Mzimba. In addition, one might witness preaching by a single woman, but this is not a regular occurrence. During the closing of the meetings an individual woman offered a prayer.

Participation in the *mvano* provided rural women in Mzimba with a unique set of experiences. The act of communing with other women, in and of itself breaks up the normal labor-intensive household routine. Participation was however often limited to recitation of verses, singing songs, or simply cooking for church visitors. Whether or not this kind of experience could somehow encourage unique outlooks or behaviors on the socio-political fronts remains to be seen however.

Conclusion

The actual conduct of research in Mzimba was guided by the above knowledge of social, political, and religious life in the area. In one respect, this knowledge involved the nature of political issues in the area, as well as the possible venues and locations where people might act on their concerns. In addition, understanding some of the important differences and similarities between these churches helped to refine and narrow research questions while in the field. These questions and their findings are presented in the following three chapters.

CHAPTER 9

CHURCHES AND ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE AT THE GRASSROOTS

What then was the impact of these churches on the organizational activities and political efficacy of local citizens? In this chapter I begin to answer this question by exploring whether the churches had any impact on the capacities and willingnesses of local-level citizens to create and participate in forms of collective organization and associational life.

My attention to the character of religious participation in these two churches helped to narrow the focus of the research while in the field. Thus while pursuing the research for both this chapter and that which follows, I did so with an eye to testing propositions informed by my understanding of some of the important differences between the local CCAP and Catholic churches. The general framework for research thus remains anchored on exploring broad hypotheses about the impact of religious participation and denomination on socio-political activities. However, narrower propositions and questions emerged from the observations of religious life as described in the previous chapter. This pertains especially to the unique, and at times contrasting, experiences of Catholic and Presbyterian women.

The research targeted two types of organizations, which together represented the only manifest forms of organizational life which the research team could locate in the Mzimba area. The first was a local association of market vendors. The second was the tobacco clubs which existed in the area. The key issues to explore were twofold. First,

did the churches have any influence on the formation of these associations? An answer in the affirmative would allow me to conclude that the churches were contributing to the growth of grassroots civil society. Secondly, did churches (either generally or specific denominations) influence patterns of individual activity in the organizations? Here attention is devoted to detecting the impact of churches on the capacity and willingness of individuals to actively participate and undertake responsibilities in social organizations. In this respect, active participation in social organizations is taken to represent a crucial, but by no means sufficient, step to local citizens having a greater role in shaping the larger processes which impact their daily lives.

The Vendors' Association

From a purely political standpoint the most interesting form of collective organization in the area was the association of local fish and vegetable vendors at the market. The association had formed in 1995 in the wake of political changes in Malawi which both limited the role of party cadres in organizing market life at the grassroots and opened new possibilities for self-initiated local organizations. The association was initially formed to simply manage the affairs of the vendors--resolving disputes, creating and dispensing funeral funds, etc.. However, in more recent times, the association had undertaken concrete political activity. The district administration had built a new market in Mzimba, approximately half a kilometer from the old market. The vendors, however claimed that the new market was not up to their standards. Water access was minimal, fencing (to protect against theft) was not provided, and the sheds were of poor quality. Much to the chagrin of the district administration and the local development officer, the

vendors refused to move from their old market. This sort of act would have been absolutely unthinkable under the Banda regime. In effect, there was a very quiet protest occurring every day in Mzimba as the vendors squatted at their old location, rather than move to the new market which simply sat empty.

The vendor's association had written letters to the district administration and the Ministry of Local Government explaining their stance and detailing their complaints. At later points, the situation actually forced an open air meeting between district administration officials, the local development officer, party leaders, and local chiefs. Here the members of the association again voiced their complaints, in colorful and articulate fashion; one member actually held up his radio and said "we know that you can talk about these things in Parliament because we have our radios here." In the end, some concessions for improving the market were made by the district officials.

As interesting a story as the vendors provide, interviews with many of the members indicated that their immediate relevance for the research question was limited. At the most basic level, the formation of the association was not based on common religious experience, but common problems faced by the vendors. Secondly, the idea for taking collective action was not inspired by religious experience. The one interesting finding was that the chairman of the association was the only individual of eight members interviewed who had any position of responsibility in church; he served as a deacon in the local Seventh Day Adventist Church. He was also no better educated than many members. This lends some support to the hypothesis that participation in church life leads to greater activity in social organizations and, indeed, personal efficacy--in this case witnessed in taking leadership of a local organization. However, in interviews, the

chairman downplayed his religious experience as a formative influence on his own leadership capacities or civic skills (organizational, public speaking, etc). Instead, he stressed that his longtime involvement in market life and frequent travels forced him to have knowledge of managing things and working with people.

Tobacco Clubs

The second arena of collective organization was the various tobacco clubs which existed in the Mzimba area. As I indicated in the previous chapter, these were organizations of tobacco-growing farmers who, on the encouragement and even direction of donors and agricultural extension officers, formed clubs. The clubs were the only way that farmers could market their produce directly to the auction floors, and obtain credit and agricultural extension services. As such it would be wrong to describe these as self-initiated associational arenas based on common perceptions of the need to cooperate and solve collective problems. Membership in a tobacco club was a necessity for anyone seeking to effectively grow and market tobacco. This said, they did meet on a regular basis, manage important collective endeavors, and routinely interact with state officials. It should be added that most, but not all, clubs had memberships of one gender.

The first issue to explore concerning the tobacco clubs was whether their formation was somehow linked to participation in church. That is, although encouraged from the top, did the actual process of getting a membership together build on connections and experiences in the religious domain? Given the sociability realized in church--either through the *mipakati*, the CCAP *mvano*, or other lay activities--it seemed plausible to hypothesize that some clubs would have roots in religious life. A positive

finding would suggest that churches were contributing to organizational life (or civil society) at the grassroots.

Such, however, did not prove to be the case. Interviews with nineteen club leaders indicated that none of the clubs had any basis for their formation in churches. Many were started by successful farmers seeking a more effective way of growing and marketing tobacco. They sought out other successful farmers and friends and relatives in their village when forming the club. In other cases, some women followed the advice of the agricultural advisor and spoke to friends they knew in the village or other women they frequently saw at the local borehole. Finally, many clubs found their roots in village meetings called by the agricultural advisor to encourage the formation of clubs at the village level. In this respect, chiefs often played a significant role in the formation of the clubs.

The second, and much larger, issue to explore concerned whether religious participation or denomination shaped the character of individual activity within the clubs. In this respect, the research focuses on which individuals took and were selected to positions of leadership within the clubs. At the level of basic intuition, it seems correct to assume that those individuals holding leadership positions were more active in their organizations. Leadership involves efforts to hold meetings, coordinate member activities, and undertake responsibilities on behalf of the group--all of which speak to greater involvement when compared to average members. It should be added that successfully leading a club involves the use of considerable organizational and interpersonal skills.

We thus use club leadership as an indicator of activity in a social organization. I explore three propositions about the impact of churches on club activity. The first is that religious participation in general contributes to individual activity in clubs. The second proposition is that denomination affects the level of club activity. The third holds that the impact of denomination will be especially salient in shaping levels of club involvement for women.

In exploring these propositions I draw primarily on the results of interviews with 105 members of tobacco clubs in the Mzimba area. Interviews were conducted by the author and his research assistants at club meetings called by the local agricultural extension officer. In addition, however, I also utilize information obtained from qualitative interviews with a select number of club leaders.

The sample of 105 club members represented nine different clubs in the Mzimba area. Of the sample, sixty-nine (66 percent) individuals were women, while thirty-six (34 percent) were men. The sample held twenty-four (23 percent) Presbyterians, thirty-two (30 percent) Catholics, and forty-nine (47 percent) persons from other religious traditions and denominations.

As mentioned, the outcome variable with which we are concerned is holding a leadership position in the clubs. This is understood to reflect higher levels of activity within the organization. Of the total of 105 members interviewed, forty-eight (46 percent) held leadership positions. However, it needs to be emphasized that some of the leadership positions obtained greater importance than others. Most of the management duties fell to the executive committee made up of the chairman, vice chairman, the secretary, and the treasurer. Of these, all except the vice chairman, had won elections to

their position. The vice chairman was generally the first runner up. Other leadership positions included the vice secretary, vice treasurer, and the members of the "committee". These individuals played a secondary role. Thus, in the analysis below, the categories of "member", "secondary leader", and "primary leader" provide a three level ordinal ranking which serves as our dependent variable. Of the 105 persons interviewed, fifty-seven (54 percent) were members, twenty-nine (28 percent) held secondary leadership positions while, nineteen (18 percent) could be considered primary leaders.

Before proceeding with the analysis one final word is in order regarding the number of individuals who obtain leadership positions. Looking at the above proportions of individuals in leadership positions, the reader may note that these proportions seem unusually high. It needs to be recognized, however, that approximately one-third (ten out of thirty members) of the club memberships attain some position of leadership. Moreover, the fact that nearly half of the sample had some leadership position likely reflects a bias within the sample. Interviews were conducted at club meetings. In all likelihood, club leaders were more diligent attendees of meetings than other members.

Religious Participation and Club Activity

The first proposition concerns whether higher levels of general religious participation lead to higher levels of activity in the clubs. Building from the research discussed in Chapter 7, the underlying assumption here is that participation in church can lead to the acquisition of civic skills and the development of personal efficacy which in turn facilitates greater activity and responsibility in social organizations. In order to establish whether such a relationship obtains, I follow two steps. First, I demonstrate that levels of

religious participation are positively associated with levels of club activity. Second, once these basic associational relationships are established, I undertake the task of assessing whether religious participation is a causal factor actually contributing to club activity.

The first step then explores whether basic associational relationships exist. In “scientific” terms, the hypothesis to be tested is that those with high levels of religious participation will show a greater tendency than others to be found in positions of club leadership, controlling for other variables. In order to establish this, the salience of religious participation must be assessed relative to other non-religious factors such as education, wealth, and age—all of which could presumably also facilitate the taking of leadership positions in clubs.

We begin by assessing the impact of the non-religious factors on club leadership. In order to explore the impact of wealth on leadership positions, the members of clubs were asked how many bales of tobacco they harvested in the year. To be sure, this provides only a rough proxy measure of wealth. Nonetheless, it does serve to differentiate farmers by their relative levels of prosperity. The range of bales harvested ran from one to sixteen. From this information a six level ordinal scale was constructed, with one representing the lowest number of bales and six representing the highest. These rankings of prosperity levels were then cross-tabulated with rankings for club leadership (see Table 9-1 below). The latter consisted of ordinal categories of “member”, “secondary leader”, and “primary leader.” The relationship is indicated by the tau-c and f statistics.

Table 9-1: Impact of Farmer Prosperity on Club Leadership

Leadership Rank	Levels of Farmer Prosperity (Bales of Tobacco):						Row Total	Row Means
	.5 - 2.0	2.1 - 4.0	4.1 - 6.0	6.1 - 8.0	8.1- 10	10.1- 16		
Member (N)	59.6%	51.9%	60%	37.5%	50%	25%	54.3% (57)	3.17
Secondary Leader	25.%	22.2%	40%	37.5%	0.0%	75%	27.6% (29)	4.0
Primary Leader	15.4%	25.9%	0.0%	25%	50%	0.0%	18.1% (19)	3.97
Column Total	100% (52)	100% (27)	100% (10)	100% (8)	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (105)	3.55

Tau-c: .09 (.23)

F (ANOVA): .99 (.38)

As is evident, there appears to be no relationship between the prosperity of the farmer and attaining positions of leadership. There are limited differences between more prosperous farmers and less prosperous farmers in terms of the proportions which attain leadership positions. Moreover, the low value (.09) and insignificance of the tau-c statistic indicates the absence of an association between these two variables.

A second factor which might affect taking a leadership position in the clubs is the age of the person. Individuals were thus asked to report their age. In the cases where the farmer did not know, the interviewer had to make a rough estimate. The ages ranged from 20 years to about 70 years. The ages were then collapsed into five year intervals (except for those above the age of 60) and cross-tabulated with the rankings for club leadership.

Table 9-2: Impact of Age on Club Leadership

Leadership Rank	Collapsed Age Rankings:									Row Total
	20 - 25	26 - 30	31 - 35	36 - 40	41 - 45	46 - 50	51 - 55	56 - 60	60 - 70	
Member	7	5	13	6	6	5	3	4	7	57
Secondary Leader	1	4	7	3	3	3	3	3	2	29
Primary Leader	1	4	6	3	1	2	0	1	1	19
Total	9	13	26	12	10	10	6	8	10	105

Tau-c: -.06 (.49)

As the table and the statistics indicate, age does not appear to be a determining factor in obtaining a position of responsibility in the clubs.

The third non-religious factor which might affect the probability that an individual obtains a leadership position is their education level. In order to assess this, interviewees were asked to report which grade they had completed in school. Virtually no farmers had proceeded further than primary school, thus the range for education levels ran from zero to eight. These nine ordinal levels were then cross-tabulated with the rankings for leadership. The tau-c and f statistic are again used to indicate the relationship (see Table 9-3 below).

Here, the relationship is quite clear. Higher levels of education tend to be associated with increasing leadership responsibilities in the tobacco clubs. Both a visual check of the relative proportions of various education levels which attain primary leadership positions, and the statistical indicators provide evidence of this.

Table 9-3: Impact of Education on Club Leadership

Leadership Rank	Farmer Education Levels (Grade Completed):									Row Total	Row Means
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Member	15	2	8	8	5	6	10	2	1	57	3.1
Secondary Leader	7	3	4	4	3	2	2	2	2	29	3.0
Primary Leader	0	0	2	0	1	5	3	2	6	19	5.9
Total	22	5	14	12	9	13	15	6	9	105	3.6

Tau-c: .27(.01)

F(ANOVA): 11.54 (.00)

The importance of education is also indicated when the categories for education are collapsed into a three level ordinal scale, low, moderate, or high, representing grades 0-2, 3-5, and 6-8 respectively (Table 9-4). This provides a better visual depiction of the relationship. In addition, while the statistical relationship is not as strong for the collapsed categories, it remains positive and significant.

The results from these two tests follow intuitive sense. Higher educated individuals tend to possess requisite skills (writing, arithmetic) needed for managing a club. In addition, education can imbue a person with greater socializing and interpersonal skills and provide them with sense of confidence or efficacy in comparison to others. The association is therefore not very surprising.

Table 9-4: Collapsed Education Rankings on Club Leadership

Leadership Rank	Levels of Education:			Row Total
	Low (Grade 0-2)	Moderate (Grade 3-5)	High (Grade 6-8)	
Member	61%	55.9%	43.3%	54.3% (57)
Secondary Leader	34.1%	26.5%	20%	27.6% (29)
Primary Leader	4.9%	17.6%	36.7%	18.1% (19)
Column Total	100% (41)	100% (34)	100% (30)	100% (105)

Tau-c: .18 (.02)

How then does religious participation compare as a potential influence on attaining a position of leadership in the tobacco clubs? Two dimensions of religious participation were explored, the relative frequency with which a person reported attending religious services, and whether not they held some position of responsibility or authority in their church. The guiding assumption, again, is that these types of religious participation facilitate the acquisition of civic skills and personal efficacy which dispose an individual to greater activity and responsibility in secular organizations such as tobacco clubs.

In order to assess their worship frequency, club members were asked how often they attended religious services at their church each month. The answers ranged from one to four (virtually nobody claimed to not attend services). When cross-tabulated with rankings of club leadership, the tau-c measure of association was both positive (.13) and significant (.07). Below I offer a visual depiction of the relationship. Importantly, owing

to the small number of respondents who claimed to attend church infrequently, the table collapses the categories for those who reported attending services only one or two times per month.

Table 9-5: Impact of Worship Frequency on Club Leadership

Leadership Rank	Worship Frequency (per month):			Row Total
	1 or 2	3	4	
Member	61%	64%	48%	54.3% (57)
Secondary Leader	31%	25%	28%	27.6% (29)
Primary Leader	8%	11%	23%	18.1% (19)
Column Total	100% (13)	100% (28)	100% (64)	100% (105)

Tau-c (no categories collapsed): .13 (.07)

Tau-c (categories collapsed for infrequent worshippers): .15 (.07)

The relationship also seems evident when examining the relative proportions of individuals in each category who obtain leadership positions. 51 percent (33 of 64) of those who reported that they attend church four times per month, hold leadership positions. The corresponding percentage for those attending church three times per month is thirty-five (10 of 28), while for those attending church once or twice per month is 38 percent (5 of 13). However, none of these proportional differences can be asserted with any level of statistical confidence.

The second indicator of religious participation is holding a leadership position in church. This might include being an elder, deacon, treasurer of the Women's Guild, or

chairperson of the *mipakati*. Based on their responses to inquiries on this issue, individuals were categorized as either “with” church authority or “without.” The cross-tabulation with club leadership positions follows below.

Table 9-6: Church Authority Positions and Club Leadership

Leadership Rank	Position of Authority in Church:		Row Total
	Without Authority	With Authority	
Member	64.6%	37.5%	54.3% (57)
Secondary Leader	18.5%	42.5%	27.6% (29)
Primary Leader	16.9%	20%	18.1% (19)
Column Total	100% (65)	100% (40)	100% (105)

Tau-c = .22 (.02)

Proportion of those without church authority holding leadership positions in clubs: .35

Proportion of those with authority holding leadership positions in clubs: .66

P value (for test equality of proportions of those in any leadership position) = .0054

As is evident, church leadership positions tend to be positively associated with club leadership positions. This is demonstrated by the tau-c statistic of .22 (.02) and also confirmed by simple tests for proportional equality.

A final indication of the importance of religious participation emerges from a church participation scale based on both frequency of worship and church authority positions. Individuals received a score of one point for the reported frequency of worship and one point if they held a position of leadership. The resulting scale ran from one to five. This was then treated as an ordinal measure of church participation and cross-

tabulated with the rankings for leadership responsibilities. The table below offers a visual depiction of the relationship when those with the lowest scores for church participation are collapsed into one category.

Table 9-7: Levels of Church Participation on Club Leadership

Leadership Rank	Ranking of Church Participation:				Row Total
	1 or 2	3	4	5	
Member	67%	67%	57%	38%	54.3% (57)
Secondary Leader	25%	25%	17%	41%	27.6% (29)
Primary Leader	8%	8%	26%	21%	18.1% (19)
Column Total	100% (12)	100% (24)	100% (35)	100% (34)	100% (105)

Tau-c (categories not collapsed) = .19 (.01)

Again, the relationship between religious participation and club leadership responsibilities is clearly indicated by the tau-c value of .19 (.01).

In short, we have indications that both levels of religious participation and education levels are associated with holding positions of responsibility within tobacco clubs. It is important as well to obtain some sense of the relative salience of both factors. In particular, we need to demonstrate that the association between religious participation and club activity obtains independent of education levels.

In order to explore this, we assessed the relationship between church authority and club authority when controlling for levels of education. The sample was divided based on relative levels of education, either low (grade 0-2), moderate (grade 3-5), or

high (grade 6-8), and analyses were run for each specific group. We begin by looking at the category for those with less education.

Table 9-8: Influence of Church Authority on Club Leadership for Less Educated

Leadership Rank	Authority in Church:		Row Total
	No Church Authority	With Church Authority	
Member (N)	68%	46%	61% (25)
Secondary Leader	29%	46%	34% (14)
Primary Leader	4%	8%	5% (2)
Column Total	100% (28)	100% (13)	100% (41)

Proportion without church authority holding club leadership: .32

Proportion with church authority holding club leadership: .53

P (for equality of proportions test) : .19

Here, a visual check suggests that having a position of authority in church increases the likelihood that a less-educated individual will be found in a position of authority in the clubs. 32 percent (9 of 28) of those without church authority hold club leadership positions. The corresponding percentage for those with church authority is 53 percent (7 of 13). However, it should be noted that the tests indicated we could not conclude with any normal level of statistical confidence that these proportions were in fact unequal. This may reflect the low number of interviewees.

Turning next to those with moderate levels of education, the importance of having authority in church is again indicated.

Table 9-9: Influence of Church Authority on Club Leadership for Moderately Educated

Leadership Rank	Authority in Church:		Row Total
	No Church Authority	With Church Authority	
Member (N)	80%	21.4%	55.9% (19)
Secondary Leader	10%	50%	26.5% (9)
Primary Leader	10%	28.6%	17.6% (6)
Column Total	20 (100%)	14 (100%)	34 (100%)

Proportion without church authority holding club leadership: .20

Proportion with church authority holding club leadership: .71

Only 20 percent of moderately educated individuals without church authority also have a position of leadership in their club. The corresponding figure for those with authority is 71 percent (also higher than any other category). The sample size precludes statistical tests for equality of proportions. However, when the sample for moderately educated individuals is combined with the less educated individuals, the findings are more conclusive. See Table 9-10 below.

Among less and moderately educated individuals without positions of authority in church, only 27 percent (13 of 35) hold club leadership positions. Of those less and moderately educated individuals with positions of authority in church, fully 66 percent (18 of 27) hold club leadership positions. The test for equality of proportions confirm the differences between the categories.

Table 9-10: Influence of Church Authority on Club Leadership for Less and Moderately Educated

Leadership Rank	Education Levels and Authority in Church:		Row Total
	Low or Moderate Education/ No Church Authority	Low or Moderate Education/ With Church Authority	
Member (N)	72.9%	33.3%	58.6% (44)
Secondary Leader	20.8%	48.2%	30.7% (23)
Primary Leader	6.3%	18.5%	10.7% (8)
Column Total	100% (48)	100% (27)	100% (75)

Proportion without church authority holding club leadership: .27

Proportion with church authority holding club leadership: .66

P (for equality of proportions test) = .0005

Finally, among those tobacco club members with high education, the importance of church leadership is not indicated in the least bit. Of those without positions of authority in church, 58 percent hold leadership positions in the clubs. The percentage however drops for those with authority in church. Only 53 percent have club leadership positions. Importantly, however, this is not at all inconsistent with, the guiding premise of church leadership being a surrogate for education. These data are indicated in Table 9-11 below.

Table 9-11: Influence of Church Authority on Club Leadership for Highly Educated

Leadership Rank	Education Levels and Authority in Church:		Row Total
	High Education/ No Church Authority	High Education/ With Church Authority	
Member (N)	41.2%	46.2%	43.3% (13)
Secondary Leader	11.8%	30.7%	20% (6)
Primary Leader	47%	23.1%	36.7% (11)
Column Total	100% (17)	100% (13)	100% (30)

Proportion without church authority holding club leadership: .58

Proportion with church authority holding club leadership: .53

Holding a position of authority in church, then, appears to be an important factor, independent of education, in shaping whether or not an individual is found in a leadership position in tobacco clubs. These findings are consistent with the underlying premise about the importance of church participation (or for that matter organizational participation), especially as laid out in Verba et al's (1993) study. Particularly for less-educated individuals, holding a position in church, in some ways, provides a surrogate for high levels of education. Church positions of authority in all likelihood provide the skills --public speaking, working with others, holding meetings--which are useful in social organizations. Moreover, such religious participation also can provide persons with a sense of personal efficacy and confidence which can lead them to believe that having a position of leadership in a club is within their range of capabilities.

In sum, we have demonstrated that levels of religious participation are associated with levels of individual activity in the tobacco clubs. Moreover, this association exists independent of education levels, which also appear to shape club activity. The indications are that religious participation actually contributes to club activity and responsibility. Still, we cannot be sure that a causal relationship is at work. Indeed, there are distinct counter-arguments to the assumption that the association between these two variables reflects the importance of religious participation.

One counter-argument is that the relationships between club leadership and church leadership may work in the opposite direction, with club leadership providing the necessary skills which individuals then take with them to obtain positions of authority in church. Unfortunately, individuals were not asked how recently they had attained positions of authority in either churches or clubs. The vast majority of clubs do not predate 1995 thus making it more likely that most church authority positions predate club authority positions. However, there is no way to determine definitively. To this it should be added that not only church leadership, but also frequency of worship is associated with club leadership positions. It would be quite difficult to argue that the causal relationship works the opposite way between these two variables, with club leadership contributing to worship frequency.

Another counter-argument is that certain personality types are simply more prone to be active in organized social life-- both religious and secular. Thus, the data above simply reflect this logical association, and not causal relationships.

In order to more thoroughly probe this issue, we turn attention to nine qualitative interviews with tobacco club leaders. All of these persons had the rank of either

chairman or vice-chairman in their club. Moreover, all of them held leadership positions in their church which predated their holding of tobacco club authority. In these interviews, I sought, among other things, to assess their own perception of the impact of their religious participation on their club leadership activities. Two questions in particular proved useful. The first question was "why do you believe you were chosen to be a leader in your club?" The second was, "what experiences have you had in the past which have helped you be a good leader?"

In the responses to the second question, six out of the nine leaders made reference to religious activities as formative on their own leadership skills. Others tended to mention things like party activities, learning from the agricultural advisor, or simply being educated. All three of those who did not reference church activities had a standard 8 education, the highest level within the sample. The others ranged from standard 5 to standard 8.

The comments from those who did reference church activities help to illustrate that, from the perspective of these leaders, participation in church affairs can facilitate taking on leadership roles in social organizations. To be sure, some references to the formative influence of church were much starker than others. At the less stark end of the spectrum might be this kind of response from one of the women:

Interviewer: Why were you chosen as a leader of your club?

Respondent: I think because people saw that I am not short tempered with others.

Interviewer: What experiences have you had in the past which have helped you be a good leader?

Respondent: I learned from the agricultural course. I was also the choir mistress at church and I was secretary of the *mipakati*.

Interviewer: How did the church experiences help you?

Respondent: Mostly I learned to stay with a strong heart and learned to persevere. So that even when I am faced with criticism I can continue to lead.

Some of the starker references are seen in the comments below. They come from two men.

Interviewer: What experiences have you had in the past which have helped you be a good leader?

Respondent: First I was chairman of the *mipakati* and then I was selected to the church council.

Interviewer: How did this help you?

Respondent: There are leadership classes every year for people who are leaders of the *mipakati*. Also in the *mipakati* I learn to lead a group. For instance when we meet as a group, we have to choose people to lead the meeting. I have also learned to listen. Before I was chosen to lead the club I had already learned to speak, because I was speaking at funerals. I spoke because I was a member of the church.

Interviewer: Why were you chosen as a leader of your club?

Respondent: People saw that I can lead a group without difficulties?

Interviewer: What experiences have you had in the past which have helped you be a good leader?

Respondent: I learned to lead very well in church. When I was in the CCAP I was the one in charge of the planks for making coffins. Then I went to the Church of Christ and became an elder. In church I also learn about loving others and that has helped me to lead the club.

The interview excerpts suggest that there is something within the church experiences of these individuals that augments their leadership abilities in their clubs. This includes learning to work with others, speaking in front of a group, and having the personal strength to handle the difficulties associated with leadership responsibilities. This is not to discount that some individuals, owing to personality traits, may simply be prone to obtain club and church leadership positions. However, the above data suggest, that, for others, in-church experiences are an important contributor to higher levels of activity in social organizations.

In sum, we not only have indications that religious participation is associated with club activity, but that it contributes to such activities. In this respect, churches, as institutions within civil society, seem to be playing a positive role in increasing the organizational activities of some citizens at the grassroots. Whether there are differences among denominations remains to be seen however.

Denominational Differences

Are there differences between the denominations in the extent to which they facilitate activity and leadership in social organizations? Some of the larger theoretical literatures suggest that some denominations differ in the extent to which encourage civic involvement. Protestantism, for instance, is supposed to instill participatory habits and provide civic skills to the faithful. Moreover, my own observations from the field highlighted potentially relevant differences between the Catholic and Presbyterian churches. Might this affect the respective organizational activities of the faithful?

A simple look at the relative proportions of those in leadership positions from the denominations suggests some evidence along these lines. However, the evidence is difficult to interpret. The table below cross-tabulates leadership rankings with three nominal classifications for denomination--Catholic, CCAP (Presbyterian), and other.

Table 9-12: Denomination on Club Leadership

Leadership Rank	Denomination/Tradition:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other Denomination	
Member	46.9%	45.8%	63.3%	54.3% (57)
Secondary Leader	34.3%	37.5%	26.5%	27.6% (29)
Primary Leader	18.8%	16.7%	10.2%	18.1% (19)
Column Total	100% (32)	100% (24)	100% (49)	100% 105

Proportion of Catholics with leadership positions: .53

Proportion of Presbyterians with leadership positions: .54

Proportion of others with leadership positions: .36

P-value (for test of equality of proportions of Catholics and Presbyterians in leadership positions and proportion of "others" in leadership positions): .08

While there is little difference in the relative proportion of Catholics as opposed to Presbyterians who obtain leadership positions (.53 and .54 respectively), there does appear to be a difference between these denominations and those labeled as "other". The latter included members of other Christian churches, as well as Muslims. While the total proportion of Catholics and Presbyterians who obtain leadership positions is .54, the

corresponding figure for those in "other" denominations is .37. The statistical tests confirm the differences between members of these traditions and denominations..

Explaining this difference is difficult. There are no statistically significant (or otherwise notable) differences in the education levels of individuals in these respective denominational groups. Moreover, there are no statistically significant (or otherwise notable) differences in the relative levels of religious participation. Those in "other" denominations have no fewer individuals in church authority positions, and roughly similar proportions of individuals fall into the various categories for frequency of worship. At this juncture, it can only be very cautiously asserted that there appears to be something within the Catholic and Presbyterian experiences which dispose individuals to obtain leadership positions to a greater degree than those in other denominations or religious traditions.

By taking a closer look at the patterns within these denominational groupings, we can perhaps shed more light on other important differences. Specifically, although we have found that religious participation and education increase the likelihood of activity and responsibility in a social organization, are these relationships the same across all three denominational groupings? The more critical issue of course concerns the impact of religious participation. Are religious organizations equal in the extent to which participation in them encourages obtaining a leadership position in the tobacco clubs?

In order to explore this issue the different denominational groups were divided into independent samples. The same statistical tests were then run on these different samples.

The patterns which are evident among the 32-person sample of Catholics are quite similar to those which are witnessed for the larger sample of club members generally. Education levels are positively associated with leadership rankings. The tau-c value is .37 (.01). Much the same, the variables indicating religious participation are also strong and significant. Frequency of worship obtains a tau-c value of .30 (.01). Holding a position of authority in church is also positively and significantly associated with club leadership rankings. The overall rankings for church participation--based on frequency of worship and whether or not a individual holds a position of authority in church--are also strong and significant, with a tau-c of .35 (.01). Finally, the nominal classification combining education levels and church authority positions indicates the significance of religious participation, independent of education. Less and moderately educated Catholics who have positions of leadership in churches are more frequently found in leadership positions in the clubs than those who do not have leadership positions in the church. The small sample size precludes the possibility of statistical tests for proportional equality however. See Appendix A for specific associational indices.

The sample of individuals in "other" denominations numbered forty-nine. As with the Catholics, education levels remain positively and significantly associated with club leadership rankings. However the relationship is not as strong, yielding a tau-c value of .23 (.05). The variables for religious participation are less conclusive. The relationship between frequency of church visits and club leadership rankings is relatively weak (.15) and just shy of statistical significance (.12). However, holding a position of authority in church is positively and significantly associated with the club leadership rankings (tau-c of .28, significant to the .04 level). So too is overall church participation

(.24, significant to .02). Finally, the data indicate the importance of religious participation independent of education. As with the Catholics, low and moderately educated individuals who have positions of leadership in churches are more frequently found in positions of responsibility in the clubs than those who do not have leadership positions in their church (see Appendix A for the specific associational indices).

In short, it appears that religious participation plays an important part for both Catholics and members of "other" denominations. Higher levels of participation in church--as witnessed in either frequency of worship visits and holding positions of responsibility in church--seem to contribute to higher levels of activity and responsibility in social organizations.

When we turn attention to the members of the Presbyterian churches, however, such a relationship is not indicated. In fact, neither education levels nor religious participation are significantly associated with holding a club leadership position. As to the religious variables in particular, neither frequency of worship nor holding leadership positions in church appear to contribute to holding a position of responsibility in the tobacco clubs. This may simply reflect the small sample size for the Presbyterians, with an "n" of 24. However it nonetheless suggests that while Presbyterians are equally likely to hold positions of authority in the clubs, they appear to draw less on church experiences (or for that matter education) when doing so (see Appendix A for specific associational indices).

The data also point out two additional issues which should be noted. This pertains more to differences between these denominations than to the more immediate issue of club leadership. First, as I indicated in the previous chapter, there are more

leadership positions available in the Catholic Church as opposed to the Presbyterian Church. The data from the tobacco club interviews offer additional evidence to confirm this. Six out of twenty-four Presbyterians have positions of authority in their church (25 percent), while fourteen out of thirty-two Catholics (44 percent) have positions of authority in church. Moreover, twenty out of forty-nine individuals from "other" denominations (41 percent) hold leadership positions in their church. Thus, the Presbyterian situation appears to offer fewer opportunities to obtain civic skills through positions of responsibility in church. Again, however, this does not seem to affect the proportion of Presbyterians who obtain leadership positions in the tobacco clubs.

The second issue concerns the question of who obtains church leadership positions among these respective denominational groups. Are leadership opportunities in church evenly distributed across educational levels? The following three tables display the distribution of church leadership positions for each denominational group across the three ordinal rankings for educational level.

Table 9-13: Authority in Church by Education Levels for Catholics

Authority in Church	Levels of Education:			Row Total
	Low (Grade 0-2)	Moderate (Grade 3-5)	High (Grade 6-8)	
Without (N)	54%	50%	67%	56% (18)
With	46%	50%	33%	44% (14)
Column Total	100% (11)	100% (12)	100% (9)	100% (32)

Table 9-14: Authority in Church by Education Levels for Other Denominations

Authority in Church	Levels of Education:			Row Total
	Low (Grade 0-2)	Moderate (Grade 3-5)	High (Grade 6-8)	
Without (N)	60%	67%	46%	59% (29)
With	40%	33%	54%	41% (20)
Column Total	100% (20)	100% (18)	100% (11)	100% (49)

Table 9-15: Authority in Church by Education Levels for Presbyterians

Authority in Church	Levels of Education:			Row Total
	Low (Grade 0-2)	Moderate (Grade 3-5)	High (Grade 6-8)	
Without (N)	100%	50%	60%	75%
With	0	50%	40%	25%
Column Total	100% (10)	100% (4)	100% (10)	100% (24)

Among Catholics it appears that there are no significant differences between the different educational groups. People with low levels of education appear just as likely as those with high levels to obtain leadership positions in church. Among those in "other" denominations, a visual check of the relative proportions suggests that those with high education levels may be more prone to obtain leadership positions in church. However, the low and moderately educated individuals do obtain leadership positions and the

differences between the educational groups are not very stark. When we turn to the Presbyterian situation, we do see some starker differences among educational groups. Virtually no individuals with "low" levels of education obtained leadership positions in the church. Leadership seems confined to those with moderate or high levels of education.

In sum, the data on the different denominations offer three general findings. First, at the most basic level there do appear to be some differences among the denominational groups in obtaining leadership positions in tobacco clubs. Specifically, individuals from "other" denominations are less likely than their Presbyterian and Catholic counterparts be found in leadership positions. Explaining this is difficult however with the available data. Second, there are differences among the denominational groups in the extent to which religious participation facilitates activity in the clubs. Whether evaluated in terms of frequency of church attendance or holding a position of responsibility in the church, higher levels of participation in Presbyterian circles does not lead to higher levels of activity or responsibility in the clubs. In this sense, while we do not know what contributes to the organizational activities of Presbyterians, the evidence suggests that church experiences are not a contributing factor. The pattern is contrary to those found for the Catholics, and to a lesser degree, those for "other" denominations. For both of these groups, religious participation is associated with club activities.

Finally, outside of the immediate issue of the tobacco club leadership, the data also provide insight concerning differences in the Catholic and Presbyterian experiences. Leadership positions are fewer and farther between in the Presbyterian churches as opposed in Catholic circles or other denominations. Moreover, leadership in the

Presbyterian churches is skewed towards the higher educated. The latter two points raise the possibility that the Presbyterian churches in Mzimba may not provide the same type of empowering experiences or civic skills when compared to other churches in the area.

Women Alone

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the more noticeable differences between local CCAP and the Catholic churches concerned the experiences of women. This was evident in number of ways. For example, more women attained leadership positions in Catholic, as opposed to Presbyterian, circles. Moreover, the quality of participation was different for Catholic women. Largely due to the character of worship and interactions in the *mipakati*, Catholic women were more often in situations where starkly-gendered social boundaries were leveled and where their participation and articulation was actively encouraged. In short, there appeared to more “empowering” kinds of experiences for Catholic women when compared to Presbyterian women. The basic hypothesis which emerges suggests that Catholic women, owing to their experience in church, are more likely to obtain leadership positions in the clubs. Presumably this would reflect higher levels of personal efficacy and civic skills resulting from their church participation.

At first glance, the hypothesis does not hold up. The following table displays the distributions of leadership position by denominational groups for women alone.

As the table indicates Catholic women are no more likely to attain leadership positions than their Presbyterian counterparts. Women from other denominations do appear less likely, however, this cannot be asserted with any level of statistical confidence.

Table 9-16: Denomination on Club Leadership for Women Alone

Leadership Rank	Denomination:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other Denomination	
Member (N)	52.6%	47%	70%	47.1% (41)
Secondary Leader	31.6%	35.3%	18.%	35.3% (18)
Primary Leader	15.8%	17.7%	12%	17.6% (10)
Column Total	100% (19)	100% (17)	100% (33)	100% (69)

Proportion of Catholics with leadership positions: .47

Proportion of Presbyterians with leadership positions: .53

Proportion of others with leadership positions: .30

P-value (for test of equality of proportions of Catholics and Presbyterians in leadership positions and proportion of "others" in leadership positions): .22

Although the initial hypothesis was found to be negative, there are other issues of importance to explore. In particular, does religion play the same role for women across all the denominational groups? The small sample sizes preclude the possibility for definitive statistical tests among the different denominational groups. Nonetheless, interesting patterns are observable, especially in so far as they mirror they larger findings for denominational groups as a whole.

For Catholic women, ("n" = 19) levels of education fail to provide a good predictor of holding leadership positions in the clubs. The relationship is statistically insignificant. However the variables indicating participation in religious life remain notable. For one, the frequency of worship variable is associated with club leadership positions and is just a shy of obtaining statistical significance (.10). Holding a position of

authority in church fails to obtain significance. However, this may merely reflect sample size. It is notable that five out of seven women who hold church authority (71 percent) also hold club leadership positions. Among those without church positions of authority, four out of twelve (33 percent) hold positions of club leadership. Moreover, when the overall measure of church participation (based on both frequency of visits and holding a church leadership position) is cross-tabulated with club leadership positions, the relationship is strong and significant (tau-c of .29, significant to .07). In short, for Catholic women, it appears that religious participation contributes to holding positions of responsibility in the clubs (see Appendix A for specific associational indices).

Among women in "other" denominations and traditions ("n" = 33), education levels remain a good predictor of club leadership positions. However, none of the variables for religious participation are statistically associated with holding club leadership positions. That said, it is notable that among women with positions of authority in church, four out of seven (57 percent) hold leadership positions in the clubs; while among those without authority in church six out of twenty six (23 percent) hold such club leadership positions. Thus while the religious participation variables are statistically weak, there are still indications that religious participation is playing some role in the obtaining of club leadership positions.

Presbyterian women ("n" = 17) display roughly the same patterns as the Presbyterian sample as a whole. Neither education nor religious variables are strong nor statistically significant. Moreover, there are no other observable indications that religious participation is an important influence on obtaining leadership positions in the clubs. It should be added that among Presbyterian women, only two out of seventeen (12 percent)

reported having positions of leadership in the church. The corresponding figure for Catholic women is seven out of nineteen (36 percent), while that for women in other denominations was seven out of thirty- three (21 percent).

The original hypothesis suggested that Catholic women would, owing to their unique in-church experiences, show a greater tendency to be active and in positions of responsibility in their social organizations. Given the data we cannot confirm this hypothesis. An equal, if not higher, proportion of Presbyterian women obtain leadership positions in the tobacco clubs when compared to Catholics. However, it does appear that Presbyterian women draw less on their religious participation than Catholic women in attaining and holding leadership positions. On one hand, this may simply be a reflection of the fact that there are fewer positions of authority available to them in Presbyterian circles. Presbyterian women have fewer possibilities to actualize leadership roles in both religious and secular spheres together. It thus follows that it will inevitably appear that church authority does not contribute to obtaining club leadership. This is however, only one component of religious participation. If we consider the other indicator of participation, frequency of worship, it again appears that religious participation plays a limited role for Presbyterians--especially when compared to Catholics.

Discussion

Tobacco clubs serve only as an initial forum to explore the impact of religion on social life. Nonetheless, the conclusions from the above analysis do suggest that experiences in church do exert some influence on levels of individual activity and responsibility in social organizations. In particular, levels of church participation appear to positively shape

levels of activity and responsibility in social organizations. This is consistent with who focus on the "objective" mechanisms through which religious institutions shape socio-political behavior (Houghland and Christenson 1983; Peterson 1992; and Verba et. al 1993). Presumably this reflects both the civic skills and personal efficacy which church experience can provide. As we have seen, this is especially important for those who are less educated. In this respect, churches appear to be playing a positive role in civil society, particularly as they provide important resources which individuals can take to their dealings with the world around them.

A notable extension of this, however, is that it is difficult at this point to gauge the mechanisms through which churches encourage higher levels of organizational involvement. Is it the "religious experiences" or simply "civic resources" they provide. An argument in favor of the latter would dismiss the religious content of church participation and claim that the their impact emerges simply from the fact that the are the only organizations at the grassroots which can offer opportunities to develop leadership skills or personal efficacy. Indeed, it difficult to argue this point. But if we return to the statements by some of the leaders of these clubs about the formative impact of church experiences, it is hard to deny that religious experiences contribute to their holding positions of responsibility in their clubs. While they reference objective skills obtained through church--being responsible, listening to others, speaking--they also indicated that other mechanisms are at work. Consider, for example, the first woman leader interviewed. She stated that she was chosen by others because she does not lose her temper. It should be added that many other club leaders indicated that this was an important attribute for a club leader to have. When asked about why her church

experience was useful to her she mentioned that it gave her a "strong heart" and an ability to persevere in the face of criticism from others. Yet another added that his ability to "love others" was an important contributor to his success as a club leader. Whether these types of experiences could be obtained in secular types of organizations is an open question.

The implications of such enhanced activity in social organizations is more difficult to pinpoint. On one hand, for women and those with less education in particular, such involvement in the socio-political world opens the possibility that a greater share of resources will come their way. It also increases the possibility that they will find their voice within the political process. While social organizations such as tobacco clubs serve an economic purpose, they are fora where persons communicate grievances to each other and to state officials. In this respect, activity in these realms contributes to even larger processes of empowering local-level actors. This point, I should add is confirmed by some of the analyses in the next chapter.

The implications should not be overstated however. For one, the cards remain stacked against those at the bottom of the political system. Thus, while there may be increased activity in social organizations by some individuals, the extension of tangible benefits to grassroots actors will be haltingly slow--perhaps requiring more than mere articulations of interests from below. Moreover, although there may be increased activity and responsibility which finds its origins in church experiences, there is no assurance that such involvement in the social world will remain civic in character. Increased efficacy and articulation skills may indeed translate into increased frustration, especially as the tangible benefits of local-level participation fail to materialize. Could this lead to anomic

outbursts or highly individuated survival tactics which in the end undermine associational life? The possibility is indeed there, especially given the desperation which confronts the lives of most rural dwellers.

At this point it may do us well to simply note the positive impact churches can have on the activity and participation in social organizations. This is an important step in creating more just distribution of resources and indeed the deepening of democratic habits. Whether certain other components fall into place to channel such outcomes in a civic and democratic manner remains to be seen. Much of this lies in the hands of actors outside of the small locale of Mzimba.

As to differences between the local Presbyterian and Catholic churches in how they encourage organizational activities, there are also some suggestive, but less conclusive findings. For one, it is evident that the Presbyterian experience offers fewer opportunities to obtain positions of authority in church which can provide civic skills and empowering experiences. Moreover, both the less-educated and women appear to be the ones who are left out of such leadership roles in church. However, this did not affect the relative proportions of individuals from different denominational groups who obtain leadership in the social organizations in question.

At another level, it appears that participation in Presbyterian circles--such as frequency of worship--does not stimulate organizational involvement in the same way that church activity does for Catholics. In this respect, the arguments of Putnam (1993), Lipset (1994), and Verba et al (1993) about the important civic role of congregationalist churches does not appear to stand up. Contrary to their expectations, the Catholic Church is playing a more positive role in shaping civic participation at the local level. It is still

too early to infer too much from this. Nonetheless it does indicate the need to focus closely on the potential for denominational differences to have some sort of impact. A more refined exploration is provided in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 10

CHURCHES AND EMERGING POLITICAL EFFICACY AMONG LOCAL CITIZENS

This chapter continues the effort to empirically explore the socializing effect of the churches on citizens in the Mzimba area. The chapter diverges from the former, however, in that it focuses on more expressly “political” behaviors and habits. No longer are we concerned with the impact of churches on the organizational activities of individuals--something which, although an important component of democratic participation, could have equally been studied under authoritarian contexts. In contrast, the central outcome variables under investigation in this chapter concern the extent to which individuals take the opportunity to participate in politics and express their interests in manners which are of limited precedent given Malawi’s history of authoritarianism. A primary, but by no means exclusive, goal of the data analysis is to discern whether or not there are differences between these denominations in terms of how they shape these emerging manifestations of political efficacy among local citizens.

As indicated, the issues explored in this chapter revolve around the larger concept of political efficacy. As such, it is important to specify the manner in which this concept is used both generally within the literature and within the project. Most treatments of political efficacy tend to define it as a subjective sense of whether individuals believe they can influence political life in community or national arenas (Bratton 1997; Wolsfeld

1986; Rosenstone and Hanson 1993). First and foremost, political efficacy is an attitudinal construct. It reflects an internal state within the citizen, capturing both their sense of competence to act politically and their willingness to do so. Such willingness to act, it should be added, inevitably implies some level of personal empowerment.

In this study, I do not intend to explore these attitudinal dimensions of political efficacy. Alternatively, the research targets what are described as “emerging manifestations” of political efficacy. Attention is devoted more to the specific behaviors of citizens rather than their attitudes. It needs to be recalled that Malawi has only recently moved from a highly repressive political regime which systematically sought to both invalidate citizen perceptions of their own felt needs and undermine their capacities to act politically. The research intends to explore the extent to which citizens have begun to move away from the habits instilled under the Banda regime to embrace relatively novel forms of engaging and attempting to shape the political world which surrounds them. In this sense, the project is concerned with the efficacy of the individual as is witnessed in the extent to which they are both active and vocal in politics. Higher levels of participation and voice in the political process are held to reflect both personal empowerment and a sense of competence.

In short then, the research in this chapter concerns the impact of religious denomination and participation on emerging manifestations of political efficacy among citizens in the Mzimba area. Specifically, this involves the extent to which individuals participate in politics and voice their interests and concerns. Both of these processes are critical if grassroots citizens are to obtain a greater share of governmental resources and a greater say and stake in the political process.

The research to explore these issues involved interviews with men and women from the Catholic Church, CCAAP congregations and prayer houses, and “other” denominations or traditions. A total of 133 persons were interviewed. The specific data for the analysis emerge from questions designed to explore three central issues.¹ First, questions sought to tap into the character of individual religious participation, which, along with denomination, remains a central independent variable in the study. Second, questions examined various “non-religious” factors against which the impact of religious variables could be assessed. This included demographic characteristics as well other potential influences on the political efficacy of local citizens. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, questions examined how citizens engaged the political world which surrounds them. This provided operational indices of their participation in politics as well as their propensity to voice concerns. Three specific areas were explored: the extent of activity in political parties, the extent to which citizens had communicated concerns in public arenas or to more powerful actors, and their willingness to articulate critical thoughts about current political leadership.

The data set is broken down into two samples, one for men ($n=51$), the other for women ($n=82$). The reasons for analyzing the data as two distinct samples rather than one large sample are fairly straightforward. For one, in terms of the outcome variables, broadly described as levels of political participation and voice, men and women simply do not compare in rural Malawi. Women are much less active in the political sphere than men. Moreover, gender plays an important part in the types of experiences an individual has in the religious domain. As I have indicated, the differences between these two

¹ The specific questionnaire is found in Appendix B.

denominations were more apparent for women than for men. As such, treating women as an independent sample allows me to draw on my specific field observations and more systematically test propositions about the impact of denomination on levels of political efficacy among women.

Research Process

Sample selection proceeded after spending approximately six weeks in the Mzimba area attending religious services, going to village gatherings, meeting with tobacco clubs, and, for lack of a better expression, just being around. The goal in the six weeks prior was to make myself and my assistants as familiar as possible to the residents of the area. Once I felt that an adequate level of familiarity had been reached, samples were gathered in the following manner.

For the Presbyterian sample, I worked through the local minister and other lay leaders of the two congregations and one prayer house we were attending. From these individuals we obtained lists of all the active members of the church, "active" being defined as attending services at least three times per month.² The individuals on the list were then assigned a numerical value. At later visits with the church elders and/or ministers, the numbers were placed into a can and selected by all the individuals present (both myself, my assistant, and the church leaders). When a number was selected it was correlated with the name on the church list, whereupon we were told by the elders

² The reason for focusing on "active" members resulted from the desire to explore the impact of denomination, much more than religious participation generally. Small samples require comparisons across like cases. For this reason we intentionally limited the variance on general levels of religious participation.

whether the selected individual would be an acceptable interviewee. In this respect, the church leaders had some veto power over who ended up on the final sample, and they did exercise that power when they felt as though an individual was not "active" enough. There were, however, few paths to obtaining a more representative sample.³ One result is that church lay leaders seem to be over represented in the sample--numbering nearly 50 percent. It should be added that none of the men and women who were selected could be married to each other. After the process was complete, we made announcements at the Sunday service that we would be visiting various members of the church to ask them questions about their life.

The same process was used in the four *mipakati* which we visited on a regular basis. Member lists were provided, numerical values were assigned, and the research team and *mipakati* leaders selected interviewees. As with the Presbyterians, we deferred to the leaders of the *mipakati* as to whether a member was an acceptable candidate to be interviewed. And as with the Presbyterians, this means that highly active members and *mipakati* leaders are over represented in the sample. At the next meeting of the *mipakati*, members were advised by us that some would be visited by the research team over the next few weeks.

The initial lists of interviewees had approximately forty men and forty women from each of these denominations. As we realized that more interviews were possible, however, the same process was used to enlarge the sample. Among Catholics and Presbyterians, no person ever declined to be interviewed. However, not all persons on the

³ Laitin (1986) confronted very similar issues in his research on the role of religion in Nigeria.

lists were interviewed. Some were away or sick. Of all the Catholic and Presbyterian homes we visited, approximately 90 percent provided interviews.

The lists of individuals from “other” denominations was a more difficult issue altogether. It simply was not possible to generate lists of persons from other denominations in the same way as we did for Catholics and Presbyterians. The solution was to simply snowball sample, using our various Catholic and Presbyterian interviewees to access individuals from other denominations. Where a sufficient level of comfort was felt with a respondent, we asked them to direct us toward a non-Catholic or non-Presbyterian friend or neighbor who might also answer our questions. In some cases we were escorted to the person, in other cases were simply told where they lived. In about 80 percent of the cases individuals accepted to be interviewed. Thus, the resulting sample of individuals from “other” denominations was both smaller and less random than we might have hoped for. The circumstances offered few alternatives however.

Interviews were conducted at the homes of individuals, usually taking thirty to forty-five minutes. Answers to questions were written down during the interview process. Initially, I was accompanied by my primary research assistant on these visits who both translated for me when necessary and conducted actual interviews. Thereafter, a second research assistant was brought onto the team to accompany me, while my original assistant independently conducted interviews.

Churches and Emerging Political Efficacy Among Men

The analysis begins by exploring the sample of men. To restate, the primary issue under investigation concerns whether churches positively contribute to local-level

political life by increasing the political efficacy of average citizens. To explore this, the analysis focuses on the impact of churches on three distinct outcome variables, all of which are taken to represent manifestations of political efficacy. The first, party membership and leadership, is treated as a measure of political participation. The second involves the extent to which individuals had taken the opportunity to voice concerns in public fora or directly to more powerful actors. The final variable is whether or not an individual demonstrated a propensity to articulate critical thoughts about the quality of the political leadership.

For each of these three outcome variables the analysis seeks first to explore the impact of religious participation generally. In this respect, I assess how “non-religious” factors compare with religious participation in shaping the political practices of local citizens. Secondly, the analysis attempts to discern the impact of denomination on the three outcome variables. Here, the exploration builds on the field observations described in Chapter 8 to determine whether denominationally-specific experiences play a part in shaping how citizens interact with the political world that surrounds them.

Party Activities

Party membership and leadership are not normally used as measures of political participation in the mainstream literature. In most cases, party membership and “partisanship”, serve as independent variables to predict the probability of conventional forms of behavior such as voting, working on a campaign, or contacting a political

official.⁴ In the context of newly democratic Malawi, however, parties represent one of the few outlets for individuals to participate in the formal political system. Contrary to the situation in western industrial democracies, in Malawi, being a member of a party represents a choice that the individual had made within the past three years, rather than the product of, for example, early socialization experiences. In the Mzimba area, both the ruling UDF and the opposition MCP were represented at the village level, affording large numbers of people the opportunity to participate in politics.

We thus initially treat party activity as a measure of political participation. As with the analysis of tobacco clubs, those who hold leadership positions in the party are taken to have higher levels of activity than that of average party members or non-members. Party leaders are assigned to hold meetings and are also points of communication between the larger parties and their local-level members. The dependent variable which emerges is a three-level ordinal scale representing non-party members, party members, and party leaders. The analysis begins by examining the proposition that general religious participation contributes to political involvement. To do this, we assess the impact of religious participation as compared to other "non-religious" variables which could also affect an individual's propensity to be active in party politics.

We begin with basic variables denoting socio-economic status. As a wide range of literature indicates, measures of socio-economic status are often associated with higher levels of political participation. (Verba, Nie and Kim 1978; and Barnes, Kaase et al. 1979; Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 1995). This is especially true of education and

⁴ See Almond and Verba (1963), Zuckerman and West (1985), Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) and Jennings (1997).

income.⁵ Thus, we might expect to find the same patterns among men in the Mzimba sample.

In terms of education levels, the men in the sample ranged from no education up to form 4, the point where an individual would normally take his or her "O-level" examination. The guiding hypothesis is that education levels, by imbuing persons with high levels of practical skills, a greater knowledge base, and a sense of efficacy relative to others, would encourage party activity. Such does not appear to be the case however. When education levels are cross-tabulated with the rankings for party activity, the value of the tau-c statistic is .2, significant to the .34 level. In order to provide visual depiction of the relationship, education rankings are collapsed into a four level ordinal ranking and cross-tabulated with party activity levels. Mean education levels for each group are provided in the latter column. Owing to the small sample size, the data are presented in raw numbers rather than percentages.

Table 10-1: Collapsed Education Levels on Party Activity (Men)

Party Activity Rank	Education Levels:				Row Total	Row Means
	Grade 0 - 2	Grade 3 - 5	Grade 6 - 8	Grade 9 and above		
Non-Member	7	4	6	1	18	4.3
Member	5	3	7	1	16	4.9
Party Leader	3	6	8	0	17	5.3
Column Total	15	13	21	2	51	4.8

Tau-c: .09 (.41)

ANOVA (F): .47 (.63)

⁵ Specific arguments about the impact of education are found in Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) and Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde (1995).

Similarly, levels of wealth--as measured by the interviewee's reported size of land holding--were found to have no impact. The reported level of land holdings ranged from .5 to 25 acres. There is little indication that as size of land-holding increases, so too the party activity. A visual depiction of the relationship between wealth and party activity is provided in the cross-tabulation below. Here the reported number of acres are collapsed into a four level ordinal scale representing different farm sizes. Mean holdings are in the latter column.

Table 10-2: Farm Size (collapsed) on Party Activity (Men)

Party Activity Rank	Reported Acres:				Row Total	Row Means
	0 - 1.99	2 - 2.99	3 - 4.99	5 and above		
Non-Member	7	6	3	2	18	2.5
Member	5	5	2	4	16	4.1
Party Leader	6	3	6	2	17	2.7
Column Total	18	14	11	8	51	3.1

Tau-c: .08 (.51)

ANOVA (F): .99 (.37)

Much the same, other demographic variables, specifically ethnicity and age, were found to have no association with party activity. These data are found in Appendix C.

A second kind of non-religious factor is more organizational than demographic in character. Here, I focus on membership in tobacco clubs as a potential influence on an individual's party activity. Much like churches, organizations such as tobacco clubs can imbue a person with certain civic skills which might facilitate their involvement in political life. Indeed, the literatures on both civil society and political participation

emphasize that any kind of organizational activity is potentially conducive to citizen activity and efficacy in politics (see Putnam 1993; Diamond 1994; Almond and Verba 1963; and Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995 for examples).

In order to explore this possibility, we examined the impact of two aspects of tobacco club involvement. The first is the length of time an individual has been a member of a tobacco club. Here the guiding premise is that the greater the amount of time spent in a club, the greater the possibility to obtain the civic skills necessary for higher levels of party activity. Individuals were thus coded on the amount of time they had been members of their tobacco clubs. Zeros represent non-members. All other numerals reflect the number of years the respondents had been members of their clubs. Cross-tabulations follow:

Table 10-3: Time Spent in Tobacco Clubs on Party Activity (Men)

Party Activity Rank	Number of Years in Club:						Row Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Non-Member	9	5	1	1	2	0	18
Member	4	8	1	2	0	1	16
Party Leader	9	7	0	1	0	1	17
Column Total	21	20	2	4	2	2	51

Tau-c: -.018 (.89)

The table and statistics very clearly indicate that the length of time an individual has been a member of a tobacco club is not associated with increases in their activity in party politics.

A second aspect of club involvement are levels of current club activity. Here, we employ ordinal rankings representing relative levels of club involvement. Unlike the conceptualization used in the previous chapter, however, the three level rankings are for “non-members”, “members”, and “leaders”. The relative importance of leadership positions is not considered. Cross-tabulations follow:

Table 10-4: Current Club Activity on Party Activity (Men)

Party Activity Rank	Club Activity:			Row Total
	Non-Member	Member	Leader	
Non-member	10	4	4	18
Member	4	7	5	16
Leader	7	2	8	17
Column Total	21	13	17	51

Tau-b: .17 (.19)

The overall visual trends in the table and tau-b statistic again suggest that club activity is not associated with party activity. In order to explore the role of club involvement more completely, however, the categories used in the above analysis were collapsed to create different dichotomous classifications. Thereafter, analyses were conducted to further detect if any associational relationships obtained between club involvement and party activity. The measures of association (taus) for these analyses are presented in the table below.

Table 10-5: Statistical Indicators for Associations Between Club and Party Activity

<u>Classification Scheme</u>	<u>Tau</u>	<u>Significance</u>
Club Member/Non-member on Party Member/Non-member	.20	(.12)
Club Member/Non-member on Party Rankings (3 levels)	.13	(.38)
Club Member/Non-member on Party Leader/All Others	.00	(1.0)
Club Leader/All Others on Party Member/Non-member	.16	(.19)
Club Leader/All Others on Party Rankings (3 levels)	.22	(12)
Club Leader/All Others on Party Leader/All Others	.19	(.14)

As the table suggests, none of the relationships between club activity and party activity can not be asserted with any level of statistical confidence. At the same time, it is important to note that certain patterns within the data are consistent with proposition that club activity is associated with party activity. Consider Table 10-6 below, which offers a visual depiction of the relationship described in the fifth row. Here the categories were collapsed to differentiate between those who hold club leadership and all others in the sample.

As is evident, club leaders are more likely than all others in the sample to be found in party leadership positions. This offers a tentative indication that club activity and party involvement are related. However, it is still not possible to discern whether club leadership contributes to party leadership or vice-versa.

Table 10-6: Current Club Activity (collapsed) on Party Activity (Men)

Party Activity Rank	Club Leader?:		Row Total
	All Others	Leader	
Non-member (N)	42% (14)	24% (4)	35% (18)
Member	32% (11)	29% (5)	32% (16)
Leader	26% (9)	47% (8)	33% (17)
Column Total	100% (34)	100% (17)	100% (51)

Tau-c: .22 (.12)

To this point, then, we have only a limited sense of what shapes the party activities of these men. Socio-economic indices are unrelated to party activities. Club involvement appears as though it might be associated in some fashion, but at that the indications are quite tentative.

What of religious participation? Logically the first area to explore is the impact of frequency of worship on party activity--as operationalized by how often a respondent reported attending services per month. Unfortunately, however, because the Presbyterian and Catholic respondents were selected on the basis of being "active" members of their churches, the distribution on this variable was skewed towards higher levels. In fact, hardly any respondents reported attending church less than three times per month. This necessarily places limitations on the analysis. Nonetheless, using frequency of worship as an independent variable provides an initial perspective into the relationship between religious activity and political participation. Below, I provide a cross-tabulation of

frequency of church visits with party activity. Because of the low number of respondents who indicated they were less frequent attendees, we collapse the categories for those who attended services only once or twice per month.

Table 10-7: Frequency of Worship on Party Activity (Men)

Party Activity Rank	Frequency of Worship (visits per month):			Row Total
	1 or 2	3	4	
Non-Member	1	4	13	18
Member	2	4	10	16
Party Leader	1	1	15	17
Column Total	4	9	38	51

Tau-b: .12 (.30)

As we can see, the data indicates that frequency of worship does not contribute to party activities.

Our second indicator of religious participation is holding a position of responsibility in church. As with the analysis of tobacco club activity, the guiding premise is that holding a position of authority in church would provide a person with important civic skills and resources which would contribute to activity in political parties. Interviewees were asked whether they held any position of responsibility in church, either presently or in the past. This allowed for a three level ordinal categorization of respondents based on whether they held church authority positions, and for how long they had done so. The first group had never held a position of responsibility in church or had attained authority in the last six months. The second group had done so beginning in

1995, meaning their leadership experience was still fairly limited. The final group were those who held positions of authority prior to 1995. We expect to find persons who have more experience in church leadership positions to be more active in party affairs.

Table 10-8: Church Authority on Party Activity (Men)

Party Activity Rank	Level of Authority in Church:			Row Total
	No Church Authority	Authority beginning 1995	Authority prior to 1995	
Non-member	8	3	7	18
Member	10	2	4	16
Leader	5	1	11	17
Column Total	23	6	22	51

Tau-b: .14 (.23)

While the findings are insignificant, further probing does lend cautious support to the proposition that higher levels of church participation encourage higher levels of party involvement. Specifically, some significant relationships are apparent if we similarly collapse the different categories as we did for the previous analysis using club involvement as an independent variable. The table below offers the statistical indices for the relationships between church authority and party activities when categories are collapsed in different ways.

Table 10-9: Associational Measures Between Church Authority and Party Activity

<u>Classification Scheme</u>	<u>Tau</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Any Church Authority/No Authority on Party Member/Non-member	-.01	(.95)
Any Church Authority/No Authority on Party Rankings (3 levels)	.12	(.39)
Any Church Authority/No Authority on Party Leader/All Others	.21	(.09)
Pre-1995 Authority/All Others on Party Member/Non-member	.06	(.65)
Pre-1995 Authority/All Others on Party Rankings (3 levels)	.23	(.13)
Pre-1995 Authority/All Others on Party Leader/All Others	.29	(.03)

As the third and sixth rows suggest, when categories are collapsed to allow for a differentiation between party leaders and all others in the sample, holding a position of authority in church is positively and significantly associated with holding a party leadership position. This is true both when church authority rankings are collapsed between those with church authority and those without, and when those holding church authority prior to 1995 are treated as a discrete category relative to the rest of the sample. The two tables below offer a visual depiction of these relationships.

Table 10-10: Church Authority on Party Activity (Men - Categories Collapsed)

Party Leader?	Level of Authority in Church:		Row Total
	No Church Authority	Church Authority	
All Others (N)	78% (18)	57% (16)	67% (34)
Party Leader	22% (5)	43% (12)	33% (17)
Column Total	100% (23)	100% (28)	100% (51)

Tau-b: .21 (.09)

Table 10-11: Church Authority on Party Activity (Men - Categories Collapsed)

Party Leader?	Level of Authority in Church:		Row Total
	All Others	Pre-1995 Authority	
All Others (N)	79% (23)	50% (11)	67% (34)
Party Leader	21% (6)	50% (11)	33% (17)
Column Total	100% (29)	100% (22)	100% (51)

Tau-b: .28 (.03)

While the findings in the data should not be overstated, they do nonetheless offer some support for the contention that active involvement in church encourages higher levels of political activity. Those who have the most leadership experience in church are most likely to be found in leadership roles in the parties. Importantly, this is consistent with the findings from the previous chapter concerning tobacco club involvement. In this respect, high levels of involvement in church appear to be associated with higher levels of activity in both civic and political organizations.

The second issue to explore is whether denomination shapes levels of political participation. Some of the larger theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter 7 suggests that Presbyterians, owing to their in-church experiences, would be more inclined to participate in politics than their Catholic counterparts. At face value, however, it does not appear that denomination affects men's party activities. The table below provides a cross-tabulation of the three denominational groups with levels of party activity.

Table 10-12: Denomination on Party Activity (Men)

Party Activity Rank	Denominational Group:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other Denomination	
Non-member	6	8	4	18
Member	5	8	3	16
Leader	9	5	3	17
Column Total	20	21	10	51

Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis): 1.3 (.51)

If anything, Catholic men appear slightly more likely to be in leadership positions. However, the differences are not so large to provide indications of real differences between these denominations.

As indicated in earlier chapters, some of the more observable differences between the local CCAP and Catholic churches pertained to the experiences of specific sub-populations within them. Intuitively, such differences could affect the political activities of members of such sub-populations. For example, it was noted that the lay leadership in the CCAP took on a greater role in managing the affairs of the “church” proper than the Catholic lay leadership. Might this lead to greater levels of political participation among the CCAP leadership when compared to Catholic leaders? The following table attempts to answer this question by comparing the party activity of different denominational groups for only those in positions of authority (pre-1996) in their churches.

Table 10-13: Denomination on Party Activity for Men in Church Authority Positions:

Party Activity Rank	Denominational Group:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other Denomination	
Non-member	5	3	2	10
Member	1	3	2	6
Leader	5	4	3	12
Column Total	11	10	7	28

Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis): .102 (.950)

Again, denomination appears to have a limited impact. CCAP male church leaders are no more likely to be active in parties than Catholic counterparts. Indeed, they appear less likely to do so.

Another difference between the two churches was that both young men and the less-educated in the CCAP appeared relatively unlikely to obtain important positions of responsibility in church. In turn, we might expect that either younger or less-educated Presbyterian men would show lower levels of political participation than their Catholic counterparts. In order to explore the impact of denomination on younger men, we removed all individuals above the age of 45 from the sample. The resulting sample size was 40. However, as is evident below, there are still few detectable differences in the party activities of the respective denominational groups.

Table 10-14: Denomination on Party Activity for Men Below the Age of 45

Party Activity Rank	Denominational Group:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other Denomination	
Non-member	5	5	4	14
Member	5	6	3	14
Leader	6	4	2	12
Column Total	16	15	9	40

Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis): .7 (.70)

As to whether denomination plays a role for less-educated individuals, the answer is less clear. In the cross-tabulation below, we removed all persons with a standard eight education or better from the sample, leaving a sample size of 40. The logical proposition is that with these higher educated persons removed from the sample, we should detect differences between Catholics and Presbyterians in terms of their party activities, with lower levels for the latter. Table 10-15 below displays the relationship.

Table 10-15: Denomination on Party Activity for Men Educated Below Standard 8

Party Activity Rank	Denominational Group:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other Denomination	
Non-member	4	8	2	14
Member	5	5	3	13
Leader	7	3	3	13
Column Total	16	15	8	40

Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis): 3.2 (.20)

Wilcoxin Z (for differences between Catholics and Presbyterians): -1.7 (.12)

Here, the observable differences are in the expected direction. Less-educated Presbyterian men appear slightly less active in party politics than their Catholic counterparts. The statistical indices fail, however, to offer more confirming evidence of this trend, leaving us somewhat ambiguous about the impact of denomination.

An additional source of ambiguity emerges when we recall the assumption underpinning our exploration. Specifically it was assumed that less-educated Presbyterians were less likely to obtain leadership positions in church. By extension they would also fail to obtain the civic skills to encourage their party involvement. However, unlike the trends observed from the sample of tobacco club members, there are no noticeable differences between Catholics and Presbyterians in terms of the proportions of less-educated who obtain leadership positions. The expected link between denomination and lower levels of party activity is simply not present in this case. This leaves our conclusions about the role of denomination even more tenuous.

In sum, in exploring party activity we find hints, but little firm evidence, of differences between these churches in the extent to which they encourage political participation among local male citizens. At this point, it is difficult to conclude that denominationally-specific experiences have much of an effect on the political efficacy of men. This said, there is some indication that church participation, in general, is associated with higher levels of political participation. In fact, the only statistically significant finding in the above analyses pertains to the difference in levels of party activity for those with considerable experience as lay leaders, as opposed to all other male churchgoers. Whether church leadership actually *contributes* to party activity is more difficult to determine. The party activities of those who have only recently obtained

church authority positions are lower than for those who have greater experience holding positions of authority in church. This suggests that church activity contributes to higher levels of political participation for some individuals. Unfortunately, the small sample size precludes further statistical tests to explore how the duration of church authority impacts party activities. At this point, we can only offer tentative suggestions that general religious participation contributes to levels of political efficacy for local male citizens.

Voicing Concerns

An equally important issue is whether churches contribute to an individual's willingness to communicate concerns in public fora, to authorities, or to potential advocates. Such spoken involvement in politics is a crucial stepping stone to greater political responsiveness to local needs. Thus, voicing of interests represents the second outcome variable with which we are concerned.

In order to assess this, the interviewee was first asked about the problems which people faced in the community. The issues raised were varied: agricultural concerns, lack of boreholes, neglect by political officials, crime, hunger, poverty. Following this, the interviewee was asked a spate of questions about whether they had raised these or *any* other issues in public fora or in communication with specific authority figures. This included questions such as: Have you ever spoken about a problem in a church setting? Have you ever informed your minister/priest/church elder about a problem? Have you ever talked to the chief about a problem? Have you spoken to development authorities about a problem? (These questions were qualified with the statement "since the political

changes in Malawi”). Most frequently, individuals who answered in the affirmative had raised issues at public meetings. Still others had sought out political authorities or potential advocates to communicate their concerns on a personal level.

Using the answers to these questions, the individual was then scored on the extent to which they had voiced their concerns. Each person received one point for the number of times they reported raising an issue. This was labeled “voice score”. In the sample of 51 men, the scores ranged from zero to five. The exact frequencies are provided in the chart below.

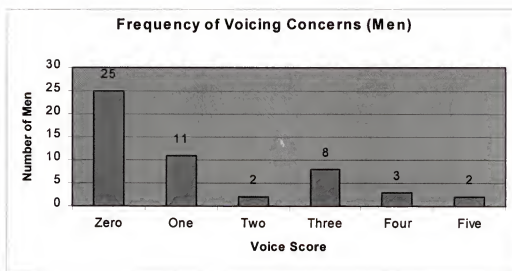


Figure 10-1: Political Voice Score Distributions for Men

Two necessary qualifiers are in order before we proceed with the analysis. First, some discretion had to be exercised when deciding whether or not to positively score some of the instances where local chiefs had been contacted on a specific issue or problem.

Certain interchanges between chiefs and individuals simply reflected the way things are customarily done in rural Malawian society. For instance, one person reported helping

his nephew negotiate with the local chief for a parcel of land--a role that is normally prescribed to the uncle of a man marrying into a different village. Still others reported having gone to the chief to help to mediate a dispute or quarrel with a neighbor. Instances such as these were not positively scored. These types of culturally expected interchanges stood in contrast to situations where individuals had gone to the chief or spoken at a village meeting about water or some other local problem.⁶

Similar concerns presented themselves when scoring instances where respondents had gone to their local minister or priest about an issue. Often, the issues raised were of a purely religious character and pertained to the role which clergy are traditionally supposed to play: consoling, absolving of sin, instructing on spiritual issues. Instances where these types of issues were raised were not positively scored. Only those situations where individuals raised "non-religious" issues with the clergy (e.g. water or lack of food) were positively scored.

The analysis for "voice score" was conducted similarly to that for party activity above. The key issue again concerned whether or not religious participation and/or denomination increased the propensity of an individual to articulate his concerns. In order to assess this, we explore the relative impact of religious and non-religious factors on "voice score" and then compare differences between the denominations

As was the case for party activity, both SES indicators and other demographic variables were found to have no association with "voice score" among men. For level of education, for instance, the value of tau-c is low (.11) and insignificant (.31). The

⁶ This is not to suggest that this kind of interchange places fewer demands on the individual initiating the contact. Still, given the a-political nature of these interchanges, it would strain the analysis to consider them an instance of voicing political concerns

statistical indices for other potential influences--levels of wealth, age, and ethnicity--are found in Appendix C.

We turn then to the organizational activities of the individual. Here, again, the premise is that activity in non-religious organizations can help imbue persons with the personal efficacy, interest, and civic skills which can facilitate their voicing of concerns. We begin by exploring their participation in tobacco clubs. Mirroring the conceptualization used above, the analysis focuses on both the amount of time they have been active in clubs and their current level of involvement. The cross tabulation for the time spent in clubs and "voice score" follows below:

Table 10-16: Time Spent in Tobacco Clubs on "Voice Score" (Men)

Voice Score	Number of Years in Club:						Row
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
0	12	10	1	1	0	1	25
1	2	6	1	1	1	0	11
2	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
3	5	1	0	1	1	0	8
4	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
5	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Column Total	21	20	2	4	2	2	51

Tau-b : .07 (.46)

Both, visible and statistical indications are quite clear in this case. The amount of time an individual has been a member of a tobacco club has little impact on their articulation of interests.

Current levels of club involvement are slightly more suggestive of the formative impact of organizational activity. As earlier, individuals were ranked as “non-members”, “members”, and “leaders.”

Table 10-17: Current Club Activity on “Voice Score” (Men)

Voice Score	Club Activity Rank:			Row
	Non-member	Member	Leader	
0	13	6	6	25
1	2	6	3	11
2	0	0	2	2
3	4	1	3	8
4	1	0	2	3
5	1	0	1	2
Column Total	21	13	17	51

Tau-c: .19 (.16)

Proportion of non-members who have articulated concerns: .38

Proportion of club members who have articulated concerns: .53

Proportion of club leaders who have articulated concerns: .65

P-value (for differences between leaders and non members): .07

In this case, the tau-c indicates that increasing levels of club activity are not significantly associated with higher levels on “voice score.” Nonetheless, statistically significant differences are observable if we consider not the *extent* to which one has articulated concerns, but, rather, *whether* they have done so. As we can see from the above figures, the proportion of “leaders” who have articulated their concerns is noticeably higher than either “members” or “non-members.” And the difference between leaders and non-members can be asserted with a significant degree of statistical confidence. This lends

support to the proposition that organizational involvement increases levels of political efficacy, as witnessed in a person's propensity to voice interests.

A second organizational activity which needs to be considered as a potential influence on "voice score" is the degree of involvement in party politics. To be sure, this stands in contrast to the above conceptualization of party activity as a dependent variable and measure of political participation. However, party activity can theoretically also shape the extent to which an individual articulates concerns. Party activities may expose the individual to more fora where such communication of concerns is possible, and, indeed, place persons in situations where such communication is expected. In addition, party activity can provide persons with the critical civic skills which facilitate greater spoken involvement in politics. As such, we treat it here as an independent variable hypothesizing that it will be positively associated with "voice score."

In the table below, the earlier classifications for party activity (non-member, member, leader) are cross-tabulated with "voice score". As the both the observable patterns in the data and the tau-c statistic indicate, party activity is associated with an individual's propensity to voice concerns. The relationship is in the expected direction and not very surprising.

Table 10-18: Party Activity on "Voice Score" (Men)

Voice Score	Party Activity Rank:			Row Total
	Non-Member	Member	Leader	
0	11	8	6	25
1	4	3	4	11
2	0	1	1	2
3	2	3	3	8
4	1	1	1	3
5	0	0	2	2
Column Total	18	16	17	51

Tau-c: .22 (.07)

In short, our examination of the potential "non-religious" influences on voicing interests indicates that both club activity and party activity are associated with "voice score", though more so the latter. This is consistent with much of the previously mentioned literature suggesting that organizational involvement encourages political efficacy and activity. It remains to be seen how participation in religious institutions compares in this respect.

Both frequency of worship and ordinal rankings for church authority are employed to assess the impact of religious participation on voicing of interests. The guiding hypotheses are that higher levels of church participation will be associated with higher voice scores. As the cross-tabulations and statistical indices below indicate, the hypotheses are confirmed.

Table 10-19: Frequency of Worship on "Voice Score" (Men)

Voice Score	Frequency of Worship (visits per month):			Row Total
	1 or 2	3	4	
0	4	5	16	25
1	0	2	9	11
2	0	0	2	2
3	0	1	7	8
4	0	1	2	3
5	0	0	2	2
Column Total	4	9	38	51

Tau-c: .15 (.06)

Table 10-20: Church Authority on "Voice Score" (Men)

Voice Score	Level of Church Authority:			Row Total
	No authority	Authority beginning 1995	Authority prior to 1995	
0	16	2	7	25
1	3	3	5	11
2	0	0	2	2
3	2	0	6	8
4	2	0	1	3
5	0	1	1	2
Column Total	23	6	22	51

Tau-c: .28 (.01)

The evidence here is quite strong. There is a visible and statistically significant relationship between frequency of worship and "voice score." Moreover, the relationship

between levels of church authority and “voice score” is stronger and can be asserted with a greater level of confidence than any of those previously explored. These findings mirror those from the tests on club activity in the previous chapter and, to a lesser extent, the tests on party activity above. Higher levels of religious participation appear to be associated with higher levels of efficacy at the grassroots.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to discern the relative salience of party activity versus church participation in terms of their association with “voice score”. With the small sample, statistical controls are difficult to utilize. In an effort to detect whether a statistical relationship obtains for party involvement when controlling for church participation, church leaders were removed from the sample and associational tests were run between party activity and “voice score.” Party involvement ceased to be visibly or statistically associated with “voice score.” However, when the reverse control was conducted and party leaders were removed from the sample, church authority rankings similarly ceased to be visibly or statistically associated with “voice score.” This does not discount our indications of a relationship between church involvement and voicing of concerns. It merely suggests that other factors are at work as well.

What of differences between denominational groups in their propensity to articulate their concerns? Much like the exploration of denominational differences on party activities, the answer appears to be no. Catholics, Presbyterians, and members of other denominations are quite similar in terms of their respective “voice scores”. See the table below.

Table 10-21: Denomination on "Voice Score" (Men)

Voice Score	Denominational Group:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other	
0	10	10	5	25
1	5	5	1	11
2	0	1	1	2
3	3	3	2	8
4	1	1	1	3
5	1	1	0	2
Column Total	20	21	10	51

Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis) = .05 (.98)

As in the analyses of party activity, tests were also run on the separate samples of the sub-populations for which we observed important differences in church experiences. In this case, there were simply no indications that denomination played any role in a man's propensity to voice concerns. As was the case for party activity, separate samples for church leaders alone and younger men yielded no discernable differences. Moreover, there were no visible differences between less-educated Catholic and Presbyterian men in terms of their voice scores. Thus, this analysis failed to corroborate the hints from the exploration of party activity that there might be greater political efficacy for less-educated Catholic men when compared the their Presbyterian counterparts.

In sum, while denomination appears to have no impact on an individual's willingness to articulate interests in public fora or to higher authority figures, the analysis does indicate that religious participation generally is associated with such activities. This

again suggests that there is some relationship between church involvement and political efficacy at the grassroots. However, as was the case for party activities, the analysis fails to conclusively indicate whether higher levels of church participation actually cause higher levels of political efficacy. On one hand, it is very likely that outspoken people are more prone to obtain leadership positions in any kind of organization, religious or secular. Much the same, outspoken people may be more prone to frequently attend church. On the other hand, the data do indicate that the longer one has held a position of authority in church, the higher their voice scores. This minimally suggests that an active role in church adds to a person's propensity to articulate interests. Presumably, this reflects the civic skills and personal efficacy obtained through such in-church experiences.

Criticizing Political Leadership

This last outcome variable examines whether or not an individual was willing to communicate critical thoughts about the quality and responsiveness of local political leadership. That is, were they willing to break from the habits instilled under the Banda regime and exercise some of their new political freedoms? To explore this, we asked the respondent if they were happy with the political leadership, especially the local MP.

To be sure, this is not normally the manner in which one attempts to study the political efficacy of an individual. Indeed, one could quite justifiably claim that the answer to such a question taps into political affect or regime support. There is admittedly a grey area about what the answer to this question tells us about the individual.

Nonetheless, there are several good reasons to treat complaining about the political leadership as an indication of emerging higher levels of political efficacy.

For one, we need to keep in mind that only three years prior to the conducting of these interviews, criticizing the local political leadership was an unthinkable act which could land anyone a considerable amount of hardship at the hands of political authorities. Thus, complaining about leadership indicates a clear cognitive break from the habits instilled on the local populace during the period of authoritarian rule. It may reflect dissatisfaction with the MP or other leaders, but it also reflects a willingness to voice that dissatisfaction, something which is relatively unprecedented. Indeed, one might see this kind of act, occurring in the context of a one to one interview with an outsider, as reflecting a cognitive state which increases the likelihood of later action in the political world. Being willing to privately articulate criticisms of the political leadership may be the first step in a larger process of political empowerment.

Moreover, as we will see below, one of the ironies in the data is that members of the ruling party are no less likely than others to articulate complaints, especially about the local Member of Parliament, who is also of the ruling party. In principle, these are the persons who are most closely aligned and supportive of the local MP. This indicates that the key issue was not how supportive of the MP a respondent was, but how willing they were to voice their dissatisfaction about him.

Finally, when we turn attention to the sample of women respondents, the answers to this question yielded interesting results in terms of differences between denominations. These results are not, I argue, a result of different levels of support for the political

leadership among women of various the denominations, but the different kinds of empowering experiences associated with denominational peculiarities.

The variable we are concerned with is dichotomous. Either the respondent complained about the political leadership or they did not. The questions were posed in the following manner: "Are you happy with the political leadership?" "What about the Member of Parliament?" Of the total of fifty-one men interviewed, thirty-six or 70 percent were critical of political leaders. The most frequent complaints pertained to the MP, both that he was not around, and that he had failed to provide things to the constituency.

Virtually none of the non-religious variables explored in the above analyses proved to be associated, statistically or noticeably, with the dichotomous outcome variable (see Appendix C for the associational measures). Below I provide two cross-tabulations to demonstrate this point. Respectively they display the relationship (or non-relationship) between voicing criticism and education and party activity.

Table 10-22: Collapsed Education Levels on Voicing Criticism (Men)

Voices Criticism?	Education levels:				Row Total
	Grade 0 - 2	Grade 3 - 5	Grade 6 - 8	Grade 9 and above	
No	6	2	6	1	15
Yes	10	10	15	1	36
Column Total	16	12	21	2	51

Tau-c: .03 (.84)

Table 10-23: Party Activity on Voicing Criticism (Men)

Voices Criticism?	Party Activity Rank:			Row Total
	Non-Member	Member	Leader	
No	5	5	5	15
Yes	13	11	12	36
Column Total	18	16	17	51

Tau-c: -.01

The variables indicating religious participation were a bit more perplexing. On the one hand, church authority rankings proved to have no relationship to voicing criticism. However, frequency of worship did, albeit, in a visibly curious manner.

Table 10-24: Frequency of Worship on Voicing Criticism (Men)

Voices Criticism?	Frequency of Worship (visits per month):			Row Total
	1 or 2	3	4	
No	0	7	8	15
Yes	4	2	30	36
Column Total	4	9	38	51

Tau-c: .20 (.09)

Although the tau-c statistic indicates a significant associational relationship, the visible trends in the data run counter to the expected pattern in so far as virtually all of the infrequent church attendees voiced complaints about the political leadership. One way to interpret this is that "non-conformists," such as those who voluntarily shun participation

in religious organizations, could be uniquely disposed to criticizing power holders. In this sense, rejection of religious authority is congruent with hostility towards secular authorities. In any case, the data lend only limited support for the proposition that church participation enhances willingness of an individual to articulate criticisms of the political leadership.

When we turn attention to the influence of denominations, we find no discernable differences between the denominations in terms of the percentages of individuals who voice criticism. See the cross-tabulation below.

Table 10-25: Denomination on Voicing Criticism (Men)

Voices Criticism?	Denominational Group:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other	
No	5	8	2	15
Yes	15	13	8	36
Column Total	20	21	10	51

Chi-Square (Kruskal-Wallis): 1.4 (.51)

It should be added that explorations of the key sub-populations, church leaders, younger men, and less educated-men, also indicated that denomination had no impact on whether or not a person was critical of the political leadership. In short then, we have little indication that religious or any other factors increase an individual's propensity to criticize the local political leadership.

Discussion

As stated at the outset of the chapter, one of the primary goals of this analysis was to determine whether or not denomination had any impact on emergent manifestations of political efficacy at the grassroots. Drawing from my earlier observations of religious life in Mzimba, I have tested a number of possible relationships in attempting to locate the importance of denomination-specific experiences for men. In the end, however we have very little evidence that denomination affects political participation or voice among the men in the sample. Only the analysis of party activity offers a few hints that there might be some effect. Even here, the evidence is questionable. In terms of the other outcome variables, “voice score” and voicing criticism, the men of the CCAP, Catholic Church, and other denominations are relatively indistinguishable.

The evidence that general religious participation has an impact on the political efficacy of local citizens is stronger. Among the men, religious participation rankings tend to be clearly associated with higher levels of party activity and voicing of interests--in both cases more strongly than any other independent variable. But questions emerge as to whether religious participation, especially as operationalized by holding a position of authority in church, is causing such behavior, or merely reflecting a logical association between the independent and dependent variables. There are some indications that length of time in a church authority position is associated with increased political participation and voice scores. This in turn supports the argument that religious participation is playing an independent role. But the small sample size makes anything more than suggestive conclusion quite difficult.

At that, it needs to be recalled that the data also highlight the importance of club and party involvement in encouraging higher levels of political efficacy. This in and of itself is an important finding, especially when we consider that SES indicators were not found to have any influence.

Churches, then, appear to be one of a selection of local organizations which offer important opportunities to obtain civic skills which can be used in the political world. In this sense, the data are again consistent with those who focus on the objective mechanisms through which religious institutions shape political behavior (Houghland and Christiansen 1984; Peterson 1992; Verba et al. 1993). It is more the character of churches as resource and skill providing organizations, than as religious organizations, that matters. This is not to dismiss their role. It merely suggests that objective mechanisms, rather than subjective experiences associated with religious participation, are the central factor through which these churches enhance the political efficacy of men in the Mzimba sample.

Churches and Political Efficacy Among Women in Mzimba

Two issues immediately present themselves when we assess how religious participation and denomination shape political efficacy among women in the Mzimba area. First, it needs to be recognized that levels of political participation and voice are much lower for women than for men. This is in many ways not very surprising. In Malawi (as elsewhere), the political sphere has historically been viewed as a male domain. It is true that during the Banda era, the women's auxiliary of the MCP was highly active. However, its role, as with that of most other party appendages was merely supportive and nearly always orchestrated from the top. At the level of society,

moreover, women are very clearly in a secondary role in terms of decision-making or activities outside of the home and garden. And while messages from on high--especially from development agencies and the government--call for the empowerment of women, at the deeper levels, social mores and practices leave women in positions of relative subservience and powerlessness.

The extension of this is that women's observable "political" activity and articulation is limited when compared to men.⁷ Consider basic levels of party activity. 64 percent of the men (thirty-two out of fifty-one) in the Mzimba sample are active in parties. The corresponding figure for women is 19 percent (sixteen out of eighty-two). Much the same, differences between men and women are observable (though perhaps less starkly) when we examine their respective voice scores. This is evident in the charts below displaying "voice score" distributions for men and for women.

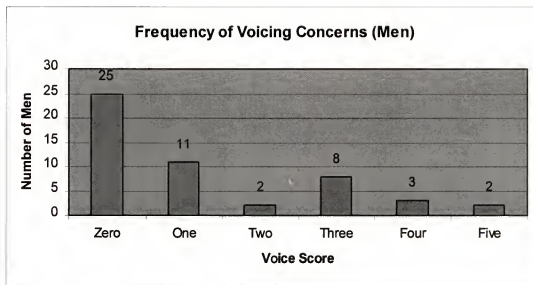


Figure 10-2: Political Voice Score Distributions for Men

⁷ To be sure, there are other forms of political activity and expression which remain untapped by this research.

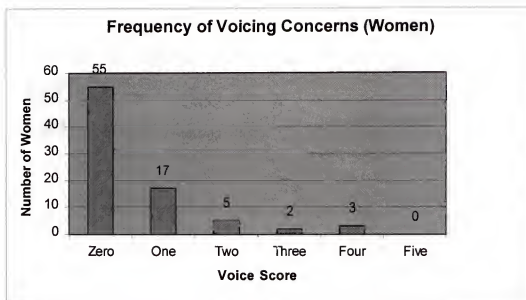


Figure 10-3: Political Voice Score Distributions for Women

51 percent of the men (twenty-six out of fifty-one) ranked positively on “voice score.”

Among women, 33 percent (twenty-seven out of eighty-two) did so. Moreover, men tended to score higher overall. Indeed, 63 percent (seventeen out of twenty-seven) of those women who scored positively did so at the lowest level attainable. Among men the corresponding figure was 42 percent (eleven out of twenty six).

Finally, the differences between men and women are also evident when comparing the relative proportions who articulated critical thoughts about the political leadership. Fully 70 percent of the men offered complaints, while only 28 percent (twenty-three out of eighty two) of the women did so.

The lower level of political participation and voice among women has implications for the investigation. On one hand, it implies real constraints for quantitative analysis. Especially for those outcome variables which are ranked ordinally,

the lack of variance limits our ability to draw conclusions based purely on statistical analyses. Most women in the Mzimba area were wholly inactive in politics and had never voiced their concerns. As such, statistical indices can only provide some, but not complete, insight into the factors (religious or non-religious) which shape emerging political efficacy among rural women. On the other hand, this also opens up possibilities for the analysis. Political activity and voice are relatively infrequent among Mzimba's women. This implies, firstly, that observable-- though not necessarily statistically significant--patterns in the data should be accepted as possible clues about the relationship (or non-relationship) between religious life and politics at the grassroots. Secondly, this also implies that those women do demonstrate higher levels of political efficacy should be treated as special cases, specifically because they break from the larger pattern of relative inactivity and silence on the part of many women.

The second issue to recognize is that, as previously described, one of the clearest differences between the local CCAP and Catholic churches pertained to the in-church experiences of women. At a general level, Catholic women obtained regular opportunities to exercise their voice in the presence of men. This was true during both the worship and reflection periods in *mipakati* meetings, and in discussions pertaining to the mundane affairs of their group. This contrasted with the observed practices in Presbyterian circles where women were rarely in situations of dialogue with men, much less encouraged to speak. In addition, Catholic women appeared more likely to obtain leadership positions in church. Once in leadership positions, they were also more prone to exercise responsibilities in meaningful ways.

Observing these differences in the field led me to conclude that if any difference was to be found between these denominations in terms of the extent to which they fostered political efficacy, those differences would be witnessed among women. For this reason, I concentrated more of my efforts on obtaining a larger sample size among the women in the area. This allows more systematic probes into the patterns within the specific denominational groups.

Party Activity

As with the sample for men, the first outcome variable, party activity, serves as an indicator of political participation. The first task of the analysis was to examine whether general religious participation had any impact on party activities. To do this, we began by exploring salience of other “non-religious” factors which seemed likely contributors to higher levels of political participation. In addition to all those variables examined in the analyses for the men in the sample, we also examined the potential influence of marital status.⁸ However, of all the factors explored, none proved to be either statistically or noticeably associated with party activities. Wealth, education, age, marital status and other demographic characteristics appear to have no impact on the party activities of the women in the sample. Much the same, neither do the variables which delineated

⁸ Several issues, however, made the collection of reliable data on marital status problematic. For one, the local population apparently viewed the research team as church-affiliated. For this reason, issues such as being voluntarily separated from spouses would have likely been concealed from us. Such behavior can lead to exclusion from the sacraments and/or discipline from church elders. In addition, one research assistant mentioned that he was uncomfortable asking women about their marital status.

organizational activities. Neither time spent in tobacco clubs nor relative levels of current involvement were associated with party activities.⁹

When we turn to levels of religious participation, the findings were similarly negative, but at the same time suggestive that some sort of relationship obtains. As with the sample for men, levels of religious participation were operationalized in two ways. The first concerned the relative frequency of worship. Cross-tabulations and associational statistics failed to indicate any sort of relationship between worship frequency and party activity. ($\text{Tau} = -.015$).

The second indicator of religious participation was based on whether individuals held church authority positions, and for how long they had done so. As was the case for the previous analysis of the male sample, three ordinal categories resulted. The first group had never held a position of responsibility in church. The second group had done so beginning in 1995. The final group were those who held positions of authority prior to 1995. Cross-tabulations follow:

Table 10-26: Church Authority on Party Activity (Women)

Party Activity Rank	Level of Authority in Church:			Row Total
	No Church Authority	Authority beginning 1995	Authority prior to 1995	
Non-member	37	7	22	66
Member	3	1	5	9
Leader	3	0	4	7
Column Total	43	8	31	82

Tau-b: .10 (.14)

⁹ See Appendix D for specific associational relationships of variables not in text.

The tau fails to indicate a statistically significant relationship. Nonetheless, patterns in the data are observably consistent with the proposition that higher levels of religious participation encourage higher levels of political activity. Those with the most experience holding positions of authority in church are those who have the highest levels of party activity. In order to explore this issue further, the above categories were collapsed to detect if any associational relationships obtained between levels of church authority and party activities. The most notable patterns emerged when those with long-standing authority in church were examined in comparison to all others in the sample. The table below offers a visual depiction of the relationship.

Table 10-27: Collapsed Church Authority Rankings on Party Activities (Women)

Party Activity Rank	Level of Authority in Church:		Row Total
	No Church Authority	Authority prior to 1995	
Non-member (N)	86% (44)	71% (22)	80% (66)
Member	8% (4)	16% (5)	11% (9)
Leader	6% (3)	13% (4)	9% (7)
Column Total	100% (51)	100% (31)	100% (82)

Tau-c: .18 (.11)

As we can see, there are some hints that higher levels of religious activity, in the form of holding a church authority position, encourages political participation among women. But at that the indications are quite subtle.

The more important tests concern the influence of denomination on party activities. Owing to our observations of the differences in the character of church experiences of Catholic and Presbyterian women, we hypothesize that Catholic women will show a greater propensity to be active in party affairs. Levels of party activity are cross-tabulated with the respective denominational categories below.

Table 10-28: Denomination on Party Activity (Women)

Party Activity Rank	Denominational Group:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other	
Non-member	27	27	12	66
Member	2	4	3	9
Leader	4	2	1	7
Column Total	33	33	16	82

Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis): .27 (.87)

At a general level, the differences in the party activities of members of each denominational group appear very slight. Nonetheless, the observable trends within the data are at least consistent with the larger premise that Catholic women should display higher levels of political participation. Twice as many Catholic women as Presbyterian women are found in party leadership positions. As the larger sample indicates, obtaining such positions of responsibility is relatively rare for a woman in Mzimba. Those who do obtain such positions of responsibility in parties are fairly unique cases.

Another interesting observation (again statistically insignificant) emerges when we remove those women classified as highly educated (standard 6-8) from the sample.

Table 10-29: Denomination on Party Activity (Women - Highly Educated Removed)

Party Activity Rank	Denominational Group:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other Denomination	
Non-member	21	17	11	49
Member	2	2	3	7
Leader	3	0	1	4
Column Total	26	19	14	60

Chi-Square (Kruskal Wallis): -.89 (.37)

Notably, the proportion of Presbyterians active in party affairs drops considerably compared to both Catholic women and women of other denominations. Indeed, with highly-educated women removed, there are virtually no Presbyterian women in party leadership positions. In this respect, less-educated Presbyterian women appear slightly less disposed to political activity than their counterparts from other denominations. Among Catholics and members of other denominations, by contrast, high levels of political activity hinge on factors other than education.

To be sure, by most conventions of social scientific research, the patterns above would represent quirks in the data, rather than actual findings. Nonetheless, these quirks need to be taken seriously as possible hints about the how religious institutions affect political habits at the local level. This is especially true in so far as they are consistent with other findings which indicate that Catholic women are slightly more likely to break from the habits of the authoritarian era and exercise novel opportunities to participate and use their voice in the political process.

Voicing Concerns

As with the exploration of party activity, the analysis of "voice score" for women began by assessing the salience of non-religious factors as compared to religious participation generally. Thereafter, we focused on the role of denomination.

Of the demographic factors none proved to be statistically or visibly associated with women's voice scores.¹⁰ This is consistent with the findings from the sample of men. Some interesting findings do emerge, however, when we examine the organizational activities of the women. Unlike the men, there were no indications among the women that party activity contributes to the voicing of interests. Activity in the tobacco clubs was an altogether different story. Both the rankings of current club activity and the amount of time a woman had spent in a tobacco club were associated with higher voice scores. The respective cross-tabulations follow.

Table 10-30: Current Club Activity on "Voice Score" (Women)

Voice Score	Club Activity Rank:			Row Total
	Non-member	Member	Leader	
0	39	9	7	55
1	9	7	1	17
2	4	0	1	5
3	0	0	2	2
4	1	1	1	3
Column Total	53	17	12	82

Tau-c: .14 (.10)

¹⁰ See Appendix D for associational relationships for all those variables not presented in the text.

Table 10-31: Time Spent in Tobacco Clubs on "Voice Score" (Women)

Voice Score	Number of Years in Club:						Row Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
0	39	10	3	2	0	1	55
1	9	5	0	1	1	1	17
2	4	0	0	1	0	0	5
3	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
4	1	1	0	0	0	1	3
Column Total	53	17	3	5	1	3	82

Tau-c: .12 (.064)

While both of the tables indicate the associational relationship between club activity and voicing of interests, the latter dimension of club involvement, actual time spent in the club, deserves special attention. Specifically, although current levels of club activity are associated with higher voice scores, it is difficult to tell which way the relationship arrow points. Indeed, it is very likely that outspoken people obtain leadership positions in clubs. On the other hand, the associational relationships between time spent in tobacco clubs and voice score imply the causal importance of the former. It is quite difficult to infer that higher voice scores contribute to the amount of time spent in a club.

Alternatively, the reasoning flows quite easily in the other direction. Club membership involves communicating concerns to fellow farmers, interacting with agricultural extension officers, or simply watching others do each of the former. In turn, these kinds of experiences offer opportunities to develop civic skills and undo habits of silence. In this respect, it makes sense that the amount of time spent in such social organizations

contributes to higher levels of political efficacy --as witnessed in voicing concerns in other fora.

What then of religious participation? Does it serve the same role that activity in tobacco clubs does in encouraging articulations of interests? The indications are that, *in general*, it does not. Neither frequency of worship nor rankings of church authority levels are associated with voice scores. Below, I provide cross-tabulations of church authority levels on voice scores.

Table 10-32: Church Authority on "Voice Score" (Women)

Voice Score	Level of Church Authority:			Row Total
	No authority	Authority beginning 1995	Authority prior to 1995	
0	32	4	19	55
1	8	2	7	17
2	3	1	1	5
3	0	1	1	2
4	1	0	2	3
Column Total	44	8	30	82

Tau-c: .07 (.38)

General religious participation does not appear to contribute the articulation of interests. This said, as we will see below, such is not the case when we examine levels of religious participation within the specific denominational groups.

We turn then to differences between the denominations. Again the guiding hypothesis is that Catholic women will show higher levels on "voice score" than Presbyterian women. Cross-tabulations follow:

Table 10-33: Denomination on "Voice Score" (Women)

Voice Score	Denominational Group:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other	
0	21	24	10	55
1	6	8	3	17
2	2	1	2	5
3	2	0	0	2
4	2	0	1	3
Column Total	33	33	16	82

Chi-Square (Kruskal-Wallis): 1.6 (.45)

Wilcoxin Z (for differences between Catholics and Presbyterians): -1.1 (.26)

Like those for party activity, the findings for "voice score" fail to indicate that there are statistically significant differences between the denominations in terms of the extent to which women voice their interests. However, the observable patterns in the data are consistent with the guiding hypothesis that Catholic women will demonstrate a higher propensity than Presbyterian women to voice their concerns. For one, a higher proportion of Catholic women (twelve out of thirty-three or 36 percent) than Presbyterian women (nine out of thirty-three or 27 percent) scored positively on "voice score." More dramatically, Catholic women are more evenly distributed across "voice score" than their Presbyterian counterparts who cluster around the lowest possible score. Indeed, of those "special cases" where women voiced concerns on more than one occasion, only one woman is in the CCAP, while six are Catholic.

Of additional importance, these observable differences between the denominations do not disappear when controlling for time spent in tobacco clubs. The

cross tabulations below display the voice scores for the respective denominational categories when all women who have been in a club for two years or more are removed:

Table 10-34: Denomination on "Voice Score" (Long-time club members removed)

Voice Score	Denominational Group:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other	
0	17	22	10	49
1	5	7	2	14
2	2	1	1	4
3	1	0	0	1
4	2	0	0	2
Column Total	27	30	13	73

Wilcoxin Z (for differences between Catholics and Presbyterians): -1 (.31)

Thus even when controlling for the most the important influence on "voice score", denomination appears to have an impact.

Once again, although the data do not allow us to conclude with any level of statistical confidence that there are differences in the extent to which members of these denominations voice their interests, the visible trends in the data are both intriguing and consistent with our guiding assumptions. Much like the observations of denominational differences in the party activities of women, the findings offer hints that there is a greater tendency for Catholic women to break from the habits of silence and inactivity which characterize most rural women in Malawi. In this respect, the data represent an additional link in a chain of evidence indicating that denomination-specific experiences

do have impact on the political habits of rural women--even if that impact is realized on only a handful of women who represent special cases.

Criticizing Political Leadership

As with the analysis of the sample of men, the last outcome variable with which we are concerned is whether or not an individual was willing to communicate critical concerns about the political leadership. This is taken to represent an important first step in the process of moving cognitively out of habits of submissiveness and silence which were ingrained during the authoritarian era.

As with the findings for men, the initial explorations of non-religious factors yielded little evidence that one factor or another contributed to an individual's propensity to voice criticisms about the political leadership. Factors such as education, wealth, club activity, and party activity all fail to be statistically or visibly associated with communication of criticism about the local political leadership.¹¹ However, there is an indication of a relationship between religious participation and complaining about political leadership. As with the men, this pertains solely to frequency of attending church services. The indications are suggestive of a possible relationship between religious participation and emerging political efficacy.

¹¹ See Appendix D for indices.

Table 10-35: Frequency of Worship by Voicing Criticism (Women)

Voices Criticism?	Frequency of Worship (visits per month):			Row Total
	1 or 2	3	4	
No	2	20	37	59
Yes	0	4	19	23
Column Total	2	24	56	82

Tau-c: .16 (.05)

The most important findings emerge when we turn attention, however, to religious denomination. The evidence of differences between the denominations is both striking and statistically significant. Observe the cross-tabulation below.

Table 10-36: Denomination Voicing Criticism (Women)

Voices Criticism?	Denominational Group:			Row Total
	Catholic	CCAP	Other	
No	20	27	12	59
Yes	13	6	4	23
Column Total	33	33	16	82

Proportion of Catholic women voicing criticism: .39

Proportion of Presbyterian women voicing criticism: .18

Proportion of women from other denominations voicing criticism: .25

P-value for test of differences of proportion between Catholics and Presbyterians: .048

More than twice the number of Catholic women voiced criticism of the political leadership. Moreover, the differences can be asserted at a 95% level of statistical confidence. To this it should be added that the Member of Parliament, against whom much of the criticism was leveled, was himself a Catholic. Thus, the differences do not

merely reflect parochial loyalties, and in fact may run counter to them. Once again then, we have evidence that Catholic women have a greater tendency to demonstrate higher levels of political efficacy than their Presbyterian counterparts.

Looking Within the Denominations

The indications to this point suggest that denomination may play some sort of role in shaping levels of political efficacy among women in Mzimba. Specifically, the data indicate that there is a slightly greater tendency for Catholic women to be both active and vocal in politics. In this section, I attempt explore this issue further by examining patterns within the denominations. The objective is to highlight some of the important differences between these denominations in terms of the empowering experiences they provide. Of primary importance in these respects are indications that the church experiences of Presbyterian women are less conducive to fostering political efficacy than is the case for Catholics.

We begin by comparing denominational patterns on the first outcome variable, party activity. The key task is to assess if there are differences between the denominations in the extent to which religious participation contributes to this form of political participation.

In the case of the Catholic women, none of the demographic or organizational factors appear to contribute to party activities. Both statistical and visible checks indicate that variables such as wealth, marital status, education, or club activities are not

associated with the outcome variable.¹² However, church participation clearly is. Below are cross-tabulations between party activities and our indicators of religious participation.

Table 10-37: Church Authority on Party Activity for Catholic Women

Party Activity Rank	Level of Authority in Church:			Row Total
	No Church Authority	Authority beginning 1995	Authority prior to 1995	
Non-member	15	4	8	27
Member	0	1	1	2
Leader	1	0	3	4
Column Total	16	5	12	33

Tau-b: .30 (.073)

Table 10-38: Frequency of Worship on Party Activity for Catholic Women

Party Activity Rank	Frequency of Worship (visits per month):		Row Total
	3 per month	4 per month	
Non-member	9	18	27
Member	0	2	2
Leader	0	4	4
Column Total	9	24	33

Tau-c: .19 (.011)

As is evident, it appears that religious participation contributes to party activities.

¹² See Appendix E for the specific statistical indices for these variables. The one variable where a relationship appears to obtain is for ethnicity. However, the indices reflect the small sample size. Only four of the thirty-three women were outside of the dominant group in the area. Meaningful comparisons between the groups is impossible.

For the Presbyterian women, patterns regarding the importance of religious participation are not indicated. Like the Catholics, none of the other “non-religious” demographic or organizational factors are associated with party activities.¹³ However, neither are the variables for religious participation. Cross-tabulations below display the relationship between church authority level and frequency of worship on party activities.

Table 10-39: Church Authority on Party Activity for Presbyterian Women

Party Activity Rank	Level of Authority in Church:			Row Total
	No Church Authority	Authority beginning 1995	Authority prior to 1995	
Non-member	12	2	13	27
Member	1	0	3	4
Leader	1	0	1	2
Column Total	14	2	17	33

Tau-b: .06 (.52)

Table 10-40: Frequency of Worship on Party Activity for Presbyterian Women

Party Activity Rank	Frequency of Worship (visits per month):		Row Total
	3 per month	4 per month	
Non-member	8	19	27
Member	1	3	4
Leader	1	1	2
Column Total	10	23	33

Tau-c: -.03

¹³ See Appendix F for statistical indices for each of these variables.

Clearly, these patterns do not resemble those for Catholic women.

Turning to the second outcome variable, "voice score", the indications are very similar. Among Catholics, none of the non-religious factors are visibly or statistically associated with "voice score." However, the variables indicating levels of religious participation again suggest the contributing role which church experiences play in heightening the political efficacy of Catholic women. See Tables 10-40 and 10-41 below.

In the case of worship frequency, although the findings are not statistically significant, the visible trend in the data suggests that those who attend church more frequently are more prone to articulate their interests. The former cross-tabulation for church authority rankings offers even more compelling evidence highlighting the contributing influence of religious participation on political efficacy for Catholic women.

Table 10-41: Church Authority on "Voice Score" for Catholic Women

Voice Score	Level of Church Authority:			Row Total
	No authority	Authority beginning	Authority prior to 1995	
0	13	2	6	20
1	1	1	4	6
2	1	1	0	2
3	0	1	1	2
4	1	0	1	2
Column Total	16	5	12	33

Tau-c: .21 (.098)

Table 10-42: Frequency of Worship on "Voice Score" for Catholic Women

Voice Score	Frequency of Worship (visits per month):		Row Total
	3 per month	4 per month	
0	7	14	21
1	1	5	6
2	1	1	2
3	0	2	2
4	0	2	2
Column Total	9	24	33

Tau-c: .16 (.21)

As for the Presbyterians, the data again fail to replicate these patterns. The one variable which does obtain significance is that for marital status. Specifically, those who have never been married appear more likely to be politically outspoken than others Presbyterians (see Appendix F). However, explaining this is quite difficult. Moreover, as indicated above, the data regarding marital status is somewhat suspect. More importantly, for the other variables, neither the non-religious factors nor the religious factors appear to contribute to articulating interests. Cross-tabulations for the religious variables on "voice score" follow.

Table 10-43: Church Authority on "Voice Score" for Presbyterian Women

Voice Score	Level of Church Authority:			Row Total
	No authority	Authority beginning 1995	Authority prior to 1995	
0	9	2	13	24
1	5	0	3	8
2	0	0	1	1
3	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	0
Column Total	14	2	16	33

Tau-c: -.07 (.55)

Table 10-44: Frequency of Worship on "Voice Score" for Presbyterian Women

Voice Score	Frequency of Worship (visits per month):		Row Total
	3 per month	4 per month	
0	6	18	21
1	4	4	8
2	0	1	1
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
Column Total	10	23	33

Tau-c: -.14

Finally, we explore denominational patterns on the third outcome variable, criticizing political leadership. Here, interestingly enough, the data do not replicate the patterns witnessed on the previous outcome variables. For Catholics, there are no

indications that any of the variables-- religious or non-religious--are associated with criticizing the political leadership. For Presbyterians, however, the data again suggest that marital status exerts some impact. In addition, however, the data also indicate that higher worship frequency is associated with criticizing the political leadership.

Table 10-45: Frequency of Worship on Voicing Criticism for Presbyterian Women

Voices Criticism?	Frequency of Worship (visits per month)		Row Total
	3 per month	4 per month	
No	10	17	27
Yes	0	6	6
Column Total	10	23	33

Tau-b: .31 (.008)

The findings seem to suggest that women's participation in Presbyterian circles contributes to higher levels of political efficacy. This said, the trend is not confirmed by the second variable for religious participation, church authority level. Moreover, the findings here do not discount the larger pattern of a general disinclination for Presbyterians to complain about the political leadership when compared to Catholics.

The patterns within the denominations thus suggest the following. For one, the church experiences of Catholic women encourage higher levels of political efficacy. At the same time, the church experiences of Presbyterian women do not have the same effect. The indications are that higher levels of religious participation in Presbyterian circles simply do not lead to a higher levels of political activity or a greater propensity to voice interests. Only with the last outcome variable--criticizing political leadership--is

there an indication that frequency of worship is associated with higher political efficacy. This may indeed be the case. But the finding in this respect runs counter to the larger patterns in the data that Presbyterian women are less prone to demonstrate higher levels of political efficacy.

Discussion

The above analyses provide several important findings as to the religious and non-religious factors shaping political habits and practices among women in Mzimba. The first concerns the general influences on emerging forms of political efficacy among women. The evidence indicates that general religious participation may exert a limited empowering influence on women. The analysis of party activities yielded some subtle indications that higher levels of religious participation were associated with higher levels of political participation. Moreover, frequency of worship was associated with criticizing the local political leadership. In this respect, it appears that churches in general are playing a small, but important role as part of civil society in terms of encouraging political activity and voice among grassroots citizens.

At the same time, however, the analysis of "voice score" failed to suggest that church activities played any sort of role. Of all the possible factors evaluated, the clearest evidence concerns the positive influence that club activity has on levels of political efficacy. Both current levels of club involvement and the amount of time spent in a club contribute to woman's propensity to voice concerns. This pattern is consistent with literature suggesting that organizational involvement *in general* contributes to the acquisition of civic skills which in turn facilitate higher levels of political participation.

That such a relationship obtains among women in rural Mzimba is in and of itself an important finding of the research.

More importantly for this study, the analyses also offer indications that denomination has some impact on emerging manifestations of political efficacy. The guiding premise was that Catholic women--owing to their unique experiences in church--would be more prone than their Presbyterian counterparts to break from habits of inactivity and silence which characterize most rural women. In the case of party activity and voicing concerns, although the statistical analyses provided no concrete evidence of higher levels of political efficacy for Catholic women, the visible trends in the data clearly do. More of the special cases of high levels of activity and voice are found Catholic women than Presbyterian women. Moreover, the analysis of voicing criticism statistically indicates that there are different proportions of Catholic and Presbyterian women who complained about the local political leadership.

Finally, examining the patterns within the denominations yielded further suggestive evidence about the importance of denominational differences. Specifically, it appears that the church experiences of Catholic women are conducive to both political participation and the voicing of interests. This stands in contrast to Presbyterians, for whom higher levels of religious participation do not appear to contribute to emerging manifestations of political efficacy. Only on the last outcome variable is there evidence to the contrary.

It would be foolish to overstate these trends within the data. It cannot be denied that most rural women are politically inactive and do not voice their interests and that this is true regardless of whether they are Catholic, Presbyterian, Muslim, or Evangelical. At

the same time, however, it would be equally, if not more foolish, to fail to further probe the trends within the data. Most women are not active in party politics, but what do we make of the fact that a few more Catholic women are found in the rare positions of party leadership? Is this mere quirk in the data or is something related to the unique experience of being Catholic? Much the same can be said of the analysis for voicing concerns. Why are a few more Catholic women articulating their interests and doing so with greater frequency? In some cases the hints are very subtle, but nonetheless crying for further exploration--especially when placed in the context of the other evidence from our data analyses. And to be sure, exploring these issues is critical to our larger understanding of churches as part of civil society.

In short, a key issue to probe concerns why most of our indicators suggest that there is something within the experience of Catholic women that encourages higher levels of political efficacy. In the next chapter, I attempt to make sense of these indications and place them within the larger framework for understanding how local-level churches contribute to political life.

CHAPTER 11

WHY SOME WOMEN SPEAK AND WHY MORE DO NOT

The analyses in the previous chapters raise important issues for further inquiry. Perhaps most significantly, we have highly suggestive evidence that there are differences between the local CCAP and Catholic churches in the extent to which they empower women to take active roles in both civic life and the political process. This stands in contrast to many theoretical assumptions about the empowering role of congregational religions when compared to the Catholic experience. How do we make sense of this evidence? Can further investigation and theoretical probing shed greater insight on the role of Mzimba's churches in this respect?

At the same time, we also have evidence that the impact of the churches is relatively limited. The differences between members of the denominations are not extremely stark. Moreover, their impact is realized on subtle manifestations of political efficacy on a discrete number of cases, rather than in a dramatic or general sense. Why is this the case?

The goal of this chapter is to answer the questions raised above. Central to this are my efforts to substantiate and make more comprehensible the intriguing findings regarding women. On the one hand, this involves the use of qualitative interviews with Catholic and Presbyterian women in the Mzimba area, allowing their own words to describe the impacts of and dynamics within the churches. On the other, and more

importantly for the dissertation, I seek to place the findings within the context of the larger theoretical framework guiding the project. Specifically, I demonstrate how attention to institutional, religious, and social factors helps us understand the socializing effect of the churches--and by extension, their contribution to the quality of democracy at the grassroots.

Specifying the Impact on Women: The In-church Experiences

In Chapter 8, I described the character of religious practices in the Presbyterian and Catholic churches in Mzimba. As emphasized at that time, I observed clear differences in the experiences of women in these two religious domains. This led me to hypothesize that Catholic women would demonstrate higher levels of organizational activities and political efficacy than their Presbyterian counterparts.

The organizational activities of women were explored in Chapter 9. Here, the research indicated that there were no differences in the proportions of Catholic and Presbyterian women who obtained leadership positions in the tobacco clubs. In this sense, the data did not confirm the hypothesis. However, patterns within the data did offer some suggestive evidence about the empowering roles of these churches. Specifically, while there was a clear relationship between church participation and club activities for Catholics, among Presbyterians, such a relationship did not obtain. These findings minimally corroborated the proposition that local CCAP churches were not a source of important civic skills for women. We do not know what experiences or skills Presbyterian women draw on when taking higher levels of responsibility in tobacco clubs, but we are fairly certain that such skills and experiences do not find their origin in church.

When we turned attention to emerging manifestations of political efficacy, the patterns within the data were supportive of the premise that Catholic women would be more prone to voice interests and participate in politics. To be sure, the data did not always offer dramatic indications to this effect, but the findings were consistently suggestive across all three of the outcome variables explored. In addition, the data analysis indicated that church participation contributes to political efficacy for Catholics, whereas it does not for Presbyterian women.

The analyses thus suggest that there is something within the church experiences of Catholic women which empowers them with a capacity and confidence to act in the social and political world. The critical issue to explore now concerns why the local Catholic church is able to contribute to grassroots political life in this small, but important, way. The earlier descriptions of religious life offer some insights as to the possible reasons. But we cannot as yet be sure of the mechanisms.

In this section, I turn to interviews conducted with some of the more active and vocal women in the Mzimba sample--the "special cases" who break from the larger trends among rural women. With the help of their voices, I intend to both substantiate and make comprehensible the patterns witnessed in the previous chapters. Specifically, *why* do our analyses suggest that Catholic women obtain experiences in church that increase the likelihood that they will be active and vocal in the socio-political world?

A total of ten women were interviewed. However, I draw for the most part on six interviews, three with Catholics and Presbyterians respectively. This provides a comparative perspective on how these relatively efficacious women view the formative impact of churches upon their own sense of competence and empowerment. In addition,

the interviews reveal important clues about the different character of experiences for women in these churches.

Two specific insights emerge from the conversations with these women. The first is that religious institutions can provide women with important experiences which empower them in the political process. To be sure, the relationship is not necessarily one of church experiences being the *sole* factor causing higher senses of efficacy. Some women, for instance, attribute their being active and vocal in politics to a distinct personality make up, claiming that, "they have always been outspoken since they were children." Still others mention specific life experiences that have contributed to their sense of efficacy. However, church experiences need to be understood as something which contribute to tendencies within persons to be outspoken or participatory. Although these tendencies may have other sources, certain dynamics and processes associated with religious participation can help to actualize them.

The second insight is that Catholic women are more likely to obtain empowering experiences in their religious life. In Catholic circles, religious participation offers opportunities to obtain civic skills and witness models of female activism and voice to a greater extent than in other settings. This is the reason we observe the patterns that we do in the data analyses in the previous chapters.

One important caveat should be clearly stated before proceeding. As the reader will note, the interviews tend to focus on the kinds of formative experiences women have had through their religious participation. My goal was to obtain their perspective on whether and how "in-church" experiences contributed to their activities and voice in the social and political world. One area not systematically explored is the content of the

religious world views held by the women. This is not to suggest that such issues are unimportant. As research by both Levine (1992) and Ireland (1991) indicates, such world views are an important factor in shaping grassroots political cultures.

The limited attention to this issue represents a shortcoming of the project which in many ways was imposed by the context within which the research was conducted. My prior efforts to penetrate the religious transcripts of local citizens had yielded largely unsatisfactory results. Possibly reflecting my perceived association with the institutional church, citizens tended to offer fairly rote responses to my queries. And the unspoken character of Malawian rural culture hindered my ability to probe such topics further. To be sure, a longer stay in the field would have allowed me to overcome some of these difficulties.

This said, the interviews do offer rich insight into the character of these local churches as socializing agents in civil society--both corroborating the indices witnessed in the quantitative analyses and providing insights into why the Catholic church in Mzimba empowered a greater number of women than the Presbyterian churches. And while not systematically exploring the content of religious ideas, as I will demonstrate, the interviews do indicate that the religious experiences of women play an important part in the development of political efficacy.

Catholics

I begin by offering excerpts from interviews with three Catholic women. In some way or another, all of these women demonstrated high levels of political efficacy. The first case is a woman with the pseudonym "Esther." Esther is in her early twenties, is

married and has one child. She comes from a very poor background and did not proceed further than standard three in her education. She became a Catholic in 1991, when she was married. She has held a position as head of the women's organization in the *mipakati* since 1994. She is also in a leadership position in the party, and scored positively on "voice score". The excerpts from her interview begin with a discussion of the general background experiences which have allowed her feel to comfortable holding leadership positions and speaking in a group of people. Thereafter, I more specifically probe the importance of her church experiences.

PVD : What experiences in the past have helped you to be comfortable being a leader and speaking in groups?

Esther: Ever since I was a child I have liked talking. I am not a shy person. As to being a leader, whenever I speak to people I try to think first about what I am going to say and then I just speak freely. Even though I did not study, whenever I am in a group I am not shy about speaking. When I was in the Church of Christ I was recognized as one of the more clever women so I was chosen to be a leader of the women's group. Otherwise I do not know why I was chosen by others to be a leader.

PVD: Have your experiences in either the Church of Christ or the Catholic Church helped you in these respects?

Esther: At church we have the opportunity to observe different people speaking. I learn by watching and listening to other people at meetings. This teaches me how to speak. Other than that, attending church has helped me to feel comfortable to speak with others.

PVD: How do you compare your experiences in the Church of Christ with that in the Catholic Church.

Esther: In the Church of Christ it was only a few people I was leading. In the Catholic Church I have more people to talk to when I speak in a meeting.

Also, before becoming a Catholic I was not used to meeting with groups as much. In the Church of Christ we just met people at funerals. Now we meet people often and in many groups.

PVD: Is there a difference between the way men and women are treated in these two churches?

Esther: When I was in the Church of Christ, I saw only a few women in positions of authority, but in the Catholic Church there are many. This makes me happy because then it becomes easier for women to help and learn from each other.

As is clear Esther, does not attribute her outspokenness or leadership roles primarily to church experiences. With more specific questions, however, she does indicate that church experiences have added to her abilities in these respects. Moreover, she pinpoints the dynamics which have facilitated her development: being in frequent meetings with large numbers of people, learning to listen and speak to others in group settings, and seeing women in authority positions. Beyond this, from her perspective the Catholic experience is unique in offering more of such opportunities to women.

A similar tone is provided by the second Catholic woman, whom we call Ulalia. She is older, in her mid-fifties, is married, and possesses moderate education. She holds a leadership position in the party and is also a leader in her tobacco club. Like Esther, she converted to the Catholic Church from the Church of Christ because of marriage a number of years earlier. Like Esther as well, although she initially fails to reference church experiences as formative on her leadership skills, more specific questions yield interesting results concerning the important influence of the *mipakati*.

PVD: You are currently a leader in both your tobacco club and in the party. What experiences in your past have helped you in those roles?

Ulalia: The most important thing was that was that I started a business even though I had done nothing like that in the past. I was transporting fish from the lake to the local markets.

PVD: What about church experiences, have those helped you at all?

Ulalia: Church has helped me to be a party leader. But it is in clubs where being active in church has helped the most. In the clubs they prefer people who are not afraid. The thing about the *mipakati* is that people are free to speak; everyone is free to speak. Like if someone is not present, you can discuss their absence. So people learn to be comfortable to discuss issues.

I was also active in the Church of Christ as a church elder up until 1981. This experience also helped me to come to feel comfortable speaking around men.

PVD: Where did you learn more in the Church of Christ or in the Catholic Church?

Ulalia: Especially in the Catholic Church because of the *mipakati* which are conducted on a regular/weekly basis.

PVD: What about differences between what women experience in these two churches?

Ulalia: In the Church of Christ, people meet just once per year, unlike in the Catholic Church where we meet at least three times per month. Even someone who would otherwise be disinterested gets interested. At these meetings you get good ideas from people.

Also, in the Church of Christ, women were not allowed to pray and preach. Unlike in the Catholic Church, women are given a chance to pray and preach.

PVD: Does that help what you do in the clubs or in the party?

Ulalia: That kind of experience takes away fear. You do not just sit shyly. The fear of speaking in a group is something the *mipakati* take away. So like at the meetings for the tobacco club when the Agricultural Advisor comes and he invites questions, you do not fear to stand up and ask questions of him. Like about fertilizer problems, transport problems, or the low selling prices that we face. That's why I have not feared asking him questions.

It is also because of being in these meetings, the *mipakati*, that one gains knowledge of how to be in a group.

In this case, we could not ask for more specific references to how the experience in the *mipakati* builds confidence and courage within women. This facilitates other secular activities such as holding leadership positions in tobacco clubs and also being an outspoken in those capacities.

Finally we turn attention to Modesta, our third Catholic. She grew up a Muslim, switched to the Church of Christ, then switched to the Catholic Church--all of this by her own volition. Interestingly as well, her conversion to Catholicism originated in her attending the village *mipakati* while she was still a member of the Church of Christ. Of all the Catholic women, she was among the most outspoken. In fact, one of her distinguishing attributes was that she was the only woman who had raised an issue with the MP at one of the local constituency meetings. She also held a position of authority in her tobacco club. She had no formal education and grew up in poverty, something she attributes to her father's recurring departures. Currently, her living standard is fairly decent and both she and her husband are in tobacco clubs.

PVD: What are the things in the past that have led you to be comfortable so you are not shy to speak or take leadership positions.

Modesta: After my father left our family the last time, there were even greater problems of basic necessities in the family. So I decided to go to Blantyre to fend for myself. I worked in the home of an Indian family. It was at this time that I learned how to be with people.

After I came back from Blantyre, I just started farming on my own. So when I met my husband and got married I was already independent.

There were also the meetings I was attending at church. While I was there I was not just sitting idle and quiet. I asked questions. It was at this time that people recognized me and I was chosen by others to be a leader.

- PVD: Which church?
- Modesta: When I was in the Church of Christ I did not learn that many things about faith or about groups and meetings. It is since coming to the Catholic Church that I learned how to stay with people in a group and to be a leader in a group.
- PVD: Why did you learn that in the Catholic Church?
- Modesta: I was never that interested in being active in the Church of Christ. I really did not know much about my faith. In the Catholic Church, they help you learn these things.
- PVD: What differences do you notice between the Catholic Church and the Church of Christ, especially in regards to what women experience?
- Modesta: The way I see it is that women are not afraid in the Catholic Church. The women see that they have a role to play instead of just leaving things to men. Like women read and they are free to speak.
- PVD: Is there anything about being a leader in Church that has helped to be a leader outside of church?
- Modesta: When I was becoming a Catholic I attended some Catechism courses. So I learned about the word of God. This has helped me to differentiate between good and evil.
- PVD: What about the experience in the *mipakati*?
- Modesta: There is speaking in a group and knowing how to stay with others in a group. We learn that in the *mipakati*. Like not speaking when others speak. In the clubs we always pray first before we start to discuss the business of the tobacco club. Others often refuse to be the ones leading the prayers at the club. But I volunteer. That courage comes from the *mipakati*. The *mipakati* has taught me to not fear in situations like that.
- PVD: What about speaking to the agricultural advisors and to other members of the club?
- Modesta: Some people are just blessed with the ability to speak and have wisdom.
- PVD: What about speaking with the MP?

Modesta: On that day he came to the area, I was among a group of people who were discussing amongst themselves about the problem of water. So I went to where he was meeting and asked that we receive boreholes.

PVD: Why did *you* have the courage to speak with him?

Modesta: It is because I am used to speaking in groups or to anybody, even from outside. So it was not difficult for me to speak with the MP.

PVD: Before you changed churches, were you the kind of a person who spoke like that ?

Modesta: No, I did not speak much before I changed churches. I just was not interested back then. And I did not like speaking boldly on such issues

Modesta's comments clearly highlight my earlier points. In her view, there are a number of reasons why she is outspoken and comfortable in groups. She moved to the city and when she returned she had established some level of independence. But church experiences are also important to her--especially those she associates with the Catholic situation. Meeting in groups and speaking in church settings served to develop her sense of efficacy. This in turn facilitated specific actions such as "speaking boldly" to the Member of Parliament on the local water problem. But she also highlights a point to which I will return more forcefully below. Her coming to understand her faith was in and of itself an important mechanism in all this. That is, not only the objective organizational skills are important to her empowerment, but also the more deeply felt religious experiences which she realized through her conversion to Catholicism.

It should be added that two other Catholic women were interviewed. While their responses similarly confirmed the importance of religious participation, the indications were less stark than those put forward above. One woman for instance stressed that her activities in the MCP, prior to Malawi's political transition, aided her ability to be active

in the party as well as outspoken today. Church experiences were also important, especially the training that leaders receive at the parish. As to the *mipakati*, she felt that women learned important skills, especially in being comfortable speaking in front of men and being comfortable in a group. However, this was true only to the extent that the *mipakati* was functioning smoothly. This latter point should not be forgotten. The issue of organizational efficacy will emerge again when we discuss the Presbyterian situation in greater detail.

Presbyterians

We turn then to the responses of several Presbyterian women. Here we observe that like the Catholic situation, religious participation is an important factor contributing to the empowerment of women. However, there are limits to these experiences. In particular, the true "empowering" experiences are not realized in general sense, but are confined for the most part to a select group of women who obtain leadership positions as church elders or deacons. As mentioned earlier, this is fairly small group of women among the larger Presbyterian faithful. The more general experience of active Presbyterian women—even those in leadership positions in the women's guild or *mvano*--provide neither the critical civic resources nor models of female activism and voice which can lead to higher levels of political efficacy. Below, I describe three interviews with Presbyterian women to help demonstrate these points.

The first woman is named Edith. She is well-educated, having completed standard eight. She is also relatively wealthy, as is indicated by her having corrugated iron roofing and red bricks on her house. (Most people have thatched roofing with simple

mud bricks). At one of the local CCAP congregations she holds the position of chair of the *mvano*. Previously she was secretary. Her higher levels of political efficacy are witnessed in her being a member of a party and in once speaking at a meeting of the school committee. She also has a leadership position in her tobacco club.

PVD: What are the experiences in your past that have helped you be a leader in the club or feel comfortable speaking in a group--like the time you did at the school meeting?

Edith: Whenever I am in a group I just do not seek to hide myself. I like talking to people. But then again, even though I am chosen to lead, I am not always happy to take the responsibility. Other than that there is not really anything in my past which has helped me to be a leader or know how to be in groups. Mostly people just like the way I conduct myself with other people.

PVD: What about experiences in church that have helped you in these things?

Edith: I used to be the secretary of the Women's Guild and we did training courses for the *mvano*. We learned to read the Bible, to preach, and to ask questions to each other about spiritual things.

PVD: Apart from this training, are there things you do in church or in the *mvano* that have helped you in the club or in the party?

Edith: There is nothing I have gained.

PVD: Have you learned anything in church that has helped you to feel comfortable in groups?

Edith: There is nothing that has helped me with my role in groups or as a leader.

PVD: Nothing at all?

Edith: When hearing preaching you also hear about avoiding temptations. If you are serious about your worshipping you take the word home with you and you then use it when you are tempted.

PVD: Has there been any experience in the women's guild that has helped you speak in groups?

Edith: Though I have been in the *mvano* for a long time, I still do not speak much. I just listen and speak when asked.

PVD: Why did you have the courage to speak at school committee meeting?

Edith: I am just not ashamed not shy. Otherwise I do not know why I have the courage to speak. In the school committee there is a small number of people. Other than that I have never spoken in a large group.

PVD: Do you think your experience in the *mvano* could have helped that?

Edith: In the *mvano*, I have stood up to lead songs, maybe that has helped me feel comfortable.

Edith does mention church-based experiences when discussing her own leadership roles.

It is important to note, however, that the references are to a special training course for *mvano* leaders. These are conducted at presbytery headquarters, some twenty-five kilometers away, and fall outside of the routine practices of Presbyterian church life. Beyond this, she is relatively dismissive of her in-church experiences. Indeed, the reader will note that I repeatedly ask her about her the formative impact of both the church generally and the *mvano* specifically. Only in the end does she offer tentative suggestions that church experiences may have played a role in giving her the courage to speak at the local school committee meeting.

Our second case is a woman named Monica. Of all in the women in the Presbyterian sample she was the most outspoken. In addition, she is a leader in the local political party branch. While growing up, her father was a relatively successful tobacco farmer. This allowed her to proceed as far as standard six with her education. She also had a small business for some time, transporting and selling maize from rural areas in the

township twenty kilometers away. She married a Catholic and changed churches at that time. However, after divorcing, she returned to the CCAP, her church of origin.

PVD: What are the things in the past that have led you to be comfortable in speaking in a group or taking leadership positions.

Monica: I am just a clever person. And I have never been a shy person. But also, I like going to things like women's training meetings sponsored by the church. At these meetings one is forced to preach to others and because of this I am forced to become clever.

PVD: What specifically have you learned in these meetings?

Monica: We also learned to be devoted and hardworking. People see this in me and that is why I am elected. And I meet and watch other intelligent women when they speak. I learn from these other women.

PVD: What about in terms of working with or speaking in front of men, most women do not do these things?

Monica: If women are shy in speaking with men, it is because they (the women) are lacking in a working spirit. I myself learned to work with men since I was appointed deacon in the church. So I have become used to this. It was subsequent to this that I was chosen to be a leader in the party.

PVD: What else have you learned through your church experiences?

Monica: At meetings in church I have come in contact with many people. So I have learned to stay in a group. Sometimes I was told to pray in a group. Because of this the fear and the feeling of shyness goes away.

PVD: What differences have you noticed between the CCAP and Catholic Church?

Monica: There is no difference.

PVD: What about how women behave or in how men treat them?

Monica: There is no difference in how women behave in these churches. There is no difference in the types of respect women obtain in these two churches.

For Monica, church experiences have clearly been important in her own development as a person who is both willing to speak and take on leadership positions. It is notable, however, that many, though not all, of the experiences she references are unique to her standing as a leader in the church. Like Edith, she claims that special training sessions for women church leaders were an important influence on her capabilities and confidence. She adds that her relative comfort in speaking and working with men in group settings results from her experience as a deacon. Only towards the end of the interview does she make references to more general experiences such as "meetings in church." This presumably would include the *mvano*, of which she is a member, but it might also include the session--an even more selective organization in the church.

It is also interesting that she sees no differences between the Catholic Church and the CCAP --particularly in the experience of women in these two settings. This stands in contrast to my own observations. In addition, it flies in the face of the earlier statements from the Catholic women about the differences between their church and Church of Christ, which is organized very similarly to the CCAP. Though she herself may witness no differences, her comments may also reflect a biased judgement. Much the same could be said of the Catholic respondents. But in the latter cases, biased judgements lead to clear statements about the special place of women in their church. Monica's biased judgement leads to a statement which suggests there are no differences.

Finally, we turn attention to Lucy, an older Presbyterian woman who is an elder in her church. She is also a member of a political party and a leader in her tobacco club. She has no education. Her husband was an army officer until he died ten years prior. As an army family, they moved around the country quite a bit, which exposed Lucy to many

different people in settings outside of normal village life. This, she maintains, is one reason she feels comfortable with others. In addition, she was a leader in the MCP, which gave her experience running meetings and working with men. However, on top of all this, her church experiences have also played an important role.

PVD: Did church help you learn to lead and to feel comfortable with people ?

Lucy: I have learned this very much from the church. When I reached Mzuzu army base, I was surprised to see that only two women were active in the congregation. So I quickly became one of the more active women. Oftentimes I would receive visitors to the congregation and this helped to feel comfortable meeting people.

Then when I moved to the Salima base and I found that there was no women's guild. So at the parish they decided to start a women's guild and I was elected to be the leader.

PVD: What was it about the *mvano* and your church experiences that helped you become comfortable as a leader.?

Lucy: From being in the *mvano* I learned to pray and to preach and to talk at funerals. From the church, it's especially the session meetings where I learn to speak freely with people.

PVD: What about speaking with men, many women are shy about that?

Lucy: When there are men around I am not afraid or shy because I am used to them. I am a church elder, so this means I have to speak in front of men or in a group in church.

As was the case for Monica, Lucy suggests that the empowering experiences in the Presbyterian Church result from her special status as a church elder. In addition, she has had a unique set of experiences owing to her frequent moves as a military dependent. In this respect, it is very hard to suggest that her own experiences apply to Presbyterian women generally.

One other Presbyterian woman was also interviewed, a local party member who also had authority in her tobacco club. However, unlike the other women she had no position of authority in church. In this case, the woman claimed that nothing in her church experiences had aided her as a leader. Instead, she stressed other experiences such as being a member of a tobacco club where men were present.

Interpretation

On one level, the interviews support the general contention that church participation can provide important empowering experiences for women. This includes learning to speak and listen to others in group setting, working with men, and seeing models of female authority and voice. For these women, these kinds of experiences have contributed to their senses of confidence and competence, helping to explain their willingness to take on leadership roles and be outspoken on matters which concern them.

More importantly, the interviews also alert us to the specific dynamics within the Catholic experience that allow women to obtain higher levels of efficacy through religious participation. For one, the critical "empowering experiences" are accessible to a larger number of women in the Catholic setting than is the case for the Presbyterian. The comments from Presbyterian women tend to reference church experiences to which only a select group of women have access. This includes those experiences associated with being leaders in the *mvano* or, especially, members of the session. Of the four Presbyterian women interviewed, two had positions as deacons or elders, and two did not. It is important to note that the latter two were relatively dismissive of the formative impact of religious participation. The responses of the Catholics, on the other hand, focus

on largely on the *mipakati* and the general character of participation therein. Indeed, referring back to the interviews, it is evident that the Presbyterian women are more prone to focus on individual experiences, whereas Catholics focus on the collective. This may reflect different classical emphases within these religious traditions. Protestantism has traditionally been more prone emphasize individual responsibility for salvation; whereas Catholicism stresses the importance of membership in the universal church--a more communitarian focus (Weber 1992; Ireland 1991).

Added to this, the primary empowering experiences tend to occur with greater frequency for Catholics. The *mipakati* meet two or four times per month. The session, by contrast, meets four to five times per year. The *mvano* meet more frequently. But few women directly referenced *mvano* participation as an empowering experience.¹ Thus, Catholic women tend to be more often in situations where they can learn civic skills than their Presbyterian counterparts. This is true of both the faithful and the lay leadership.

The interviews also suggest that the nature of participation is unique for Catholic women. Consider for example the emphasis on open dialogue within the *mipakati*. The women point out that "everyone is free to speak" or that they learn how to "speak in a group and listen to others." These are important attributes that are relatively unique to the *mipakati*. The Presbyterians, by contrast, emphasize learning to pray and preach in front of others. This is important but perhaps not as conducive to acquiring important skills such as discussing mundane affairs and working with others. Moreover, the Catholic women emphasize that women as a group have a role to play in church settings, be it

¹ Indeed, there is no difference between average *mvano* members (leaders removed) and non-members in terms of how they scored on any of the outcome variables indicating political efficacy.

through readings or holding authority positions. No Presbyterian women offered similar references.

Thus, the interviews indicate that while church participation may encourage higher levels of efficacy among women, the Catholic situation is especially unique in the extent, and perhaps even intensity, of the empowering experiences it provides. Coupled with what we know from our observations of church life in the Mzimba area, we begin to understand why more of our special cases of female activity and voice are found among Catholics. Recall, for instance, the distribution of leadership positions in the Catholic setting increased the likelihood that Catholic women would obtain leadership positions in which they regularly interacted with men. The simple density of organizational positions was much greater in the Catholic Church. Moreover, our observations of the character of women's participation in these settings also indicated that Catholic women had more opportunities to use their voice in the presence of men than Presbyterian women.

In short, the interviews help us to understand why more Catholic women are breaking from the habits of passivity and silence instilled during the Banda years. At this point, we turn to some of the larger theoretical frameworks guiding the dissertation. Our goal is to place the findings and discussions above in the context of institutional, religious, and social factors.

Understanding the Impact on Women: Institutional, Religious, and Social Factors

As I emphasized at the outset of the dissertation, as well as in my explorations of the clergy, the manner in which the churches contribute to local-level political life is linked to three larger factors: institutional, religious, and social. This is also true when we

consider their socializing effect on women. The critical issue is how these factors, both separately and interactively, shape the specific in-church experiences of the faithful.

To restate briefly, by institutional factors, I refer to characteristics of the larger ecclesiastical organizations. As was discussed in the section on the clergy, this referred, on one hand, to the tenor of the macro-institutions, especially as put forth by church leaders. On the other hand, and more important to our purposes, such institutional factors include the design of the ecclesiastical organization. This pertains to both the organizational framework of the institution and the distribution of authority within that framework.

When turning attention to religious factors, my conceptualization is different from that employed in the study of the clergy. In that portion of the research, I sought to examine specific mission orientations and how such orientations influenced clergy activities in their local communities. Again, as I have acknowledged, the research in Mzimba did not systematically explore the content of specific religious world views or grassroots theologies of the citizens in the area. As such, I do not attempt interpret personal understandings of faith, much less suggest the impact of such understandings on the development of political efficacy. Though to be sure, this is an area deserving of exploration in future research efforts.

Instead, as conceived in this portion of the study, religious factors refer to the subjective experiences associated with religious practices. In this respect, I draw on the interviews to tease out how certain emotional and psychological processes encourage the intensification of religious participation. This in turn allows for the acquisition of civil skills and the development of political efficacy.

Finally, by social factors, I refer to the manner in which larger social influences shape the effect of these churches. Churches can be infiltrated by local-level values and power dynamics, and this has distinct implications for what the faithful experience in and take away from church. In other contexts, such infiltration by social influences can propel the institution to take a more positive role towards local-level political life.² In the context of rural Malawi, and more specifically Mzimba, however, the presence of larger social influences in the church undermines the capacity of the church to play a positive political role in empowering marginalized citizens. This was true when we explored the political activities of the clergy, and it remains true when we look at the socializing effect of the churches.

I begin by analyzing the question of how and why the local-level Catholic Church provides empowering experiences for women. The answer to this question involves attention to both institutional and religious factors.

In the first place, we need to consider the *mipakati* as an institutional arrangement which allows for the empowerment of women. In particular, the *mipakati* provide a distinct space which offers women the opportunity to obtain tangible skills and experience unique social practices which diverge from “traditional” patterns in Malawian society. Such patterns involve highly gendered social roles, which often limit group social interactions between men and women and confine the latter to largely domestic responsibilities. In this sense, this feature of Catholic institutional design provides women a type of experiential learning environment which abets their capacities and willingnesses to act in the political world. This involves acquiring objective skills such

² Such a point is made by Mainwaring (1986); see also Levine (1987).

as public speaking, holding leadership positions, and learning to work in groups. It also involves more subjective processes, specifically undoing habits of silence and passivity by watching other efficacious women and learning to feel comfortable in the presence of men.

The reason that the *mipakati* provide this kind of learning space, moreover, is tied to their character within the larger Catholic institution. Most importantly, the *mipakati* should not be viewed as a devolution of authority within the church--something which enhances the control of local actors over the conduct of church affairs. Instead, the *mipakati* represent a deconcentration of the church organization, very much within the framework of a hierarchical and patriarchal institution. Through this organizational innovation, lay involvement and participation increases, as witnessed in the routine meetings at the village level. But, ultimate, and in some cases even basic, authority remains with the universal church--as represented in the local clergy. The extension of this is that this grassroots organization remains somewhat insulated from local values and power dynamics. Religious practices and organizational management within the *mipakati* are guided from the top. And the top dictates that this organizational extension of the church must have women present and must have some women in leadership roles. In this sense, the use of the *mipakati* is more akin to the desegregation process in the American south during the 1950s and 60s, than it is to efforts to devolve decision making to local governments. This is an institutional initiative generated from above which allows for a greater distribution of important resources (in this case civic, rather than political, legal or educational) at the community level. As we will see below, this stands in marked contrast to the Presbyterian situation, where the capturing of the local church by local

values and power dynamics undermines the capacity of the institution to provide a similar space for women.

The issue is not simply one of institutional factors however. True, the peculiar character of Catholic institutional design creates more opportunities for women to obtain civic skills. But religious factors are also part of the reason why the Catholic Church is better at empowering local women than the local CCAP churches. We need to consider the causal importance of the subjective and emotional processes associated with religious participation. The critical issue is how institutional features interact with the religious experiences of women. Specifically, the Catholic Church is particularly well-suited to intensify the religious experiences of the faithful. In turn, this intensification is an important stepping stone to women obtaining higher senses of efficacy.

Consider the religious experiences associated with participation in the *mipakati*. In addition to what we have discussed above, women also associate the *mipakati* with the growth of their own faith and spiritual knowledge. To be sure, the Catholic Church sees this as the entire *raison d'être* of the *mipakati*; and in many cases it works. During my discussion with Esther, she emphasized the spiritual fulfillment she obtains from the *mipakati*. Indeed, she adds that before becoming a Catholic she did not know that much about God and spiritual matters. But because of going to “meetings where they hear the Gospel”, she understands her faith better. Similar statements about the ability of the Catholic Church to intensify religious experiences were offered by Modesta, who converted to Catholicism after experiencing the *mipakati*. Prior to becoming a Catholic she claims that she did not know much about her faith. But catechism courses as well as

through her participation in the *mipakati* have deepened her understanding of her own religion.

One important outcome of this intensifying of the religious experience is that it stimulates interest in participating in church affairs. As Ulalia put it concerning the *mipakati*, “even someone who would otherwise be disinterested gets interested.” In this sense, deepening faith is necessary precursor to heightened levels of religious participation. This point seems to be de-emphasized in much of the literature that highlights the objective mechanisms through which religious institutions stimulate political participation. It is true that churches provide important civic resources. But people have to go to church to get these resources. And one reason they go is because of they want to practice their faith and obtain spiritual fulfillment. It follows that, all other things being equal, churches which do a better job at providing spiritual fulfillment will obtain higher quality participation from the faithful and by extension, provide them with important civic skills. This helps us understand the situation in Mzimba. Simply put, it appears that the Catholic Church is doing a better job of intensifying the religious experiences of women. In turn, this encourages greater levels of interest and meaningful participation--necessary precursors to taking advantage of the learning opportunities offered in the *mipakati*.

Beyond merely stimulating higher participation, these faith deepening dynamics may also play another important role. We need to consider the possibility that deeper senses of religious commitment serve as a psychological resource that encourages higher levels of political and social efficacy. As Fredrick Harris writes “internal religiosity promotes one’s feelings of effectiveness in politics” (1994: 62). Unfortunately the data

do not directly explore this issue. But it seems a very likely part of the equation behind the higher levels of political efficacy of Catholic women in the Mzimba area. Indeed, the interviews with the Catholic women offer some hints that this is indeed the case.

In short, the empowering capacity of the local Catholic church in Mzimba results from both institutional and religious factors. On one hand, the *mipakati* are a unique institutional feature which create an insulated space for women to obtain civic skills and empowering experiences. On the other hand, women obtain important sets of religious experiences in the Catholic church. This stimulates the religious participation which is a necessary stepping stone to accessing the skills and opportunities offered by the church. Moreover, such faith-deepening experiences may provide women with a higher sense of psychological strength, which is itself a progenitor of higher levels of political efficacy.

We turn then to a second critical question: Why do the local CCAP churches fail in these respects? As I mentioned earlier, one of the ironies of the findings is that they run counter to some of the assumptions about the impact of religious tradition on political culture and behavior. Congregational types of religion are supposed to stimulate efficacy, empowerment, and civic activities among citizens, while Catholicism is believed to dampen or simply not contribute to such tendencies. (Lipset 1994; Bollen 1979; Putnam 1993; Verba et al. 1993) But among the rural women of Mzimba, the reverse relationship obtains.

In order to understand the inability of the Presbyterian churches to inculcate higher levels of organizational activities and political efficacy among Mzimba's women, we need to focus in the first place on simple issues of institutional design. In particular, and as should be obvious, the Presbyterian churches fail to provide an equivalent

institutional space for women's participation. Neither for general church participants nor for the *mvano* women is there the same kind of experiential learning environment provided by the *mipakati*. The opportunities to obtain civic skills and empowering experiences remain confined to a highly select group of women elders and deacons.

Moreover, the character of Presbyterian institutional design mitigates against the development of such an insulated space for women's empowerment. As indicated, the entire basis of the Presbyterian system is the devolution of church authority to the local congregations. Local churches respond to initiatives and directives from the larger ecclesiastical organization, embodied in the synod, but management of the church lies considerably in the hands of local actors. One result is that there are only limited possibilities for the higher ecclesiastical authorities to ordain the use of distinct organizational practices and structures which provide women opportunities to learn and exercise civic skills on a regular basis. Indeed, any Synod general secretary or moderator who attempted to do such a thing would be committing political suicide--running afoul of the larger body of church elders who elect him every six years. Quite obviously this is contrary to the Catholic situation.

Beyond the basic issues of institutional design, it is equally, if not more, important to specify how such institutional factors interact with larger social influences to shape the character of Presbyterian experience at the local level. In particular we need to consider how the institutional design of the CCAP facilitates the penetration of the church by local power dynamics and allows for the infiltration of local values into Presbyterian practices--all of this to a greater extent than is the case for the Catholic Church. In turn, this affects

both the experience of women in the church and the overall possibilities for efficacious organizational practice at the grassroots.

Regarding the experience of women, values and practices in the CCAP mirror those in Malawian society which dissuade women's involvement in the socio-political world. In this sense the Presbyterian situation resembles the Anglican situation in Nigeria as described by David Laitin (1986). Explaining the inability of the Anglican Church to influence political values he claims the church failed to provide an alternative model to society. Within the church, he writes "the inegalitarian aspects of Yoruba society were reinforced" (1986: 68).

Consider the *mvano* for example, the primary locus for Presbyterian women's participation--this although it remains an exclusive institution. In their auxiliary religious practices, women remain separated from men. Moreover, their role is to support the larger male-dominated institution. Much the same, from my observations, the women who obtained the status of elder or deacon in the church remained relatively silent and subservient in their roles, much as they are in the village setting. When women do a play a significant role, it is on "Women's Sunday", which as I indicated, a special day set aside to reverse the normal *modus operandi* of primarily male participation in the service. In effect, local patriarchal tendencies become replicated in CCAP structures and practices. This hinders the likelihood of women obtaining empowering experiences or models of activism and voice in church.

In a second respect, the decentralized character of the CCAP can limit the possibilities for effective organizational practices at the local level. Without the insulation provided by hierarchy and priestly mediation, potentially disruptive social

practices have a greater tendency to enter the church, hindering the basic functioning of the organization. Below I offer anecdotes concerning two social practices--witchcraft and prebendalism--to help elaborate these points.

Tales of witchcraft or *ufiti* are relatively common in Malawian society. This was no less true in the rural setting of Mzimba. Indeed, the area in general carried a notable reputation for "lots of *ufiti*." Local churches were not immune from this. However, one of the local CCAP congregations was particularly prone to disfunction owing to accusations and fears of witchcraft among the membership. For example, prior to the arrival of the new minister, the congregation had fallen into disarray. The reasons for this were never totally clear. Nonetheless, one factor which amplified the disruption of the congregation were accusations of witchcraft leveled at many of the church elders. It was only with the arrival of the minister that the congregation again began to function smoothly. But the problems continued even with the minister in place. During my stay, elections were held for the *mvano* leadership. After the elections, the minister's wife confided in me that a few of the newly elected did not want to take their positions of authority in the organization, largely because they feared *ufiti*. Those in leadership roles are often the target of such practices.³

Petty prebendalism is also relatively common at the grassroots. As indicated in Chapter 8, both state officials and even local chiefs used their situations for personal gain, usually at the expense of the average rural citizen. Such practices also surfaced within the

³ In this respect, taking a leadership position from someone else opens the possibility of retribution through witchcraft practices. This is consistent with what Geschiere (1997) describes as the "leveling" tendencies within witchcraft. See his treatment for a fuller--and generally excellent--discussion.

same CCAP congregation. The local minister recounted that prior to his arrival local elders would routinely skim off the Sunday collection. Christians knew this was going on, but either did nothing or simply left for other churches. Moreover, during my stay, the congregation's funeral fund was squandered by the elder responsible for holding it. After numerous meetings the issue was resolved and the elder in question was excommunicated.

In both of these cases, disruptive social practices are infiltrating the local CCAP church and undermining the basic functioning of the organization. Christians depart for other churches. The session is occupied by squabbles between elders. The *mvano* operates under duress. That these situations would limit the ability of the church to socialize behavior or provide civic skills is self-evident. To the extent that the local organization functions poorly, its impact will necessarily be limited.

It is important to specify that I am not saying that Catholics are less likely than Presbyterians to engage in witchcraft or prebendalism. Nor am I arguing that such practices are not found in Catholic settings. The point is that the institutional character of the Catholic Church makes it less possible for such practices to enter and disrupt the functioning of its local organizational appendages. For example, the fact that the priests retain the bulk of control over money removes one potential source of conflict--and thus also the in-church use of witchcraft and prebendalism--among the faithful.⁴ Moreover, disputes between church members--over whatever issue--have a locus for neutral arbitration in the Catholic clergy. This is not the case in the CCAP. Even if a minister is present, disputes can escalate to the point of total organizational disruption. Indeed, the

⁴ To be sure, this also presents another potential source of conflict.

local clergy can even become involved in such disputes. The minister in Mzimba indicated that elders had collaborated against him because he had forbidden their pilfering of the Sunday collection.

In these respects, the Catholic church is a bit better at insuring organizational efficacy. This is a necessary prerequisite to providing civic skills. Moreover, it allows for the intensification of the religious experience which in and of itself is a stepping stone to higher levels of political efficacy. For the Presbyterian situation, the institutional character of the ecclesiastical organization allows for the infiltration of local values and practices into the grassroots church. On one hand this means that disempowering tendencies in society are replicated in the institutional spaces in church. On the other, it means that disruptive social practices can enter and undermine organizational efficacy.

As an important caveat before concluding this discussion, my pointing out the deleterious impact of social influences should not be misinterpreted. In particular, I am not offering some sort of crude condemnation of Malawian culture or society. I do not see grassroots prebendalism or witchcraft as essential elements of some sort of mythological "Malawian political culture or tradition." These are instead social practices which, on one hand, are related to many of the hardships and disruptions which confront Malawian society--and the efforts of local people to deal with these difficulties. On the other hand, they are related to the state-level practices which have typified governance in Malawi's post-colonial era.

Specifying and Understanding the Non-impacts

The findings regarding the greater tendency for the local Catholic church to provide empowering experiences for women are among the most important of this dissertation. It is in this respect that we see one of the churches under study making a clear contribution to political life at the grassroots. For this reason, I devoted special attention to exploring why the Catholic Church was able to play this role to a greater extent than the Presbyterian churches in Mzimba.

But questions remain about some of the non-impacts of these churches. For one, why are there no differences in their effects on the political efficacy of men? Moreover, why is the impact on women realized in a very selective and, at that, subtle manner? Why do the churches fail to have a broader and more dramatic impact across the rural population?

The first question returns us to the analysis of the sample of men discussed in the previous chapter. As indicated, general religious participation was associated with, and may have even contributed to, both party activities and political voice among men. In this sense, churches generally play an important role in enhancing the political efficacy of rural men. However, there were few differences between the denominations in these respects.

Explaining this lack of difference between members of the denominations presents few difficulties. In the first place, the character of religious participation in these two churches is not as starkly different for men as it is for women. In both of these churches men play a dominant role and have opportunities to acquire civic skills.

Moreover, neither of these churches provides different models of efficacy in the same manner that the Catholic situation does for women.

In the second place, the lack of differences between members of these denominations pertains to the role of men in society more generally. For women, daily routines revolve largely around domestic work. The only respite is often religious participation, or in some other cases, club participation. That both of these "out of home" experiences would have some sort of formative impact on women's efficacy is understandable. Men, however, have greater opportunities to learn civic skills in other fora. Men tend to go to school longer. Men tend to be involved in the production of cash crops (as opposed to food crops) thus bringing them into greater contact with market activity. Men also tend to "move about" more frequently than women, whether looking for work or simply visiting with others at local drinking establishments. In this sense, if a man fails to pick up civic skills in church, he might very well acquire them in other situations. This helps us understand why there are limited differences in the extent to which these churches empower men. Other influences in all likelihood dilute the formative impact of church experiences.

Of greater importance is the issue of why the churches do not have a more dramatic and widespread impact on political efficacy and activity among citizens. Especially among women, the contribution of the churches to higher levels of participation and voice is confined to a select few. Generally speaking, the churches do not empower large numbers of women. Moreover, the churches are not associated with dramatic instances of collective political action by grassroots citizens, but individual acts which are at times quite subtle.

In order to understand this, we return attention to the importance of larger social factors. Primarily, we need to consider how the objective social circumstances in which many people live mitigate against the development of higher efficacy or empowerment. In this sense, the reason the study finds limited political efficacy has very little to do with the churches *per se*. It pertains to the basic reality which confronts rural dwellers. This is an important consideration not only for this project, but also for the entire question of local-level empowerment in new African democracies.

Political efficacy, the subjective sense that one can shape the world around them, does not exist outside of objective social and political circumstances. Having some sense of efficacy implies that the actor can see the opportunities for affecting the circumstances in which he or she lives. But from the perspective of many in the Mzimba area, seeing such opportunities to affect change is simply not possible. "Reality", from the perspective of many rural dwellers, is constituted of entrenched poverty, an unresponsive political system, and a dearth of "habits of cooperation." Thus, regardless of the objective skills or empowering experiences churches might provide, the social world offers few incentives to actualize those skills and experiences through political voice or participation.

The point was driven home in the responses of women to one question in particular--heretofore not discussed. The question was asked, "You have told us about many of the problems, which confront people in this community, what can people do about these problems?" To this, respondents would generally offer one to three responses, providing a total of 107. These are categorized below in a chart displaying how frequently they were mentioned:

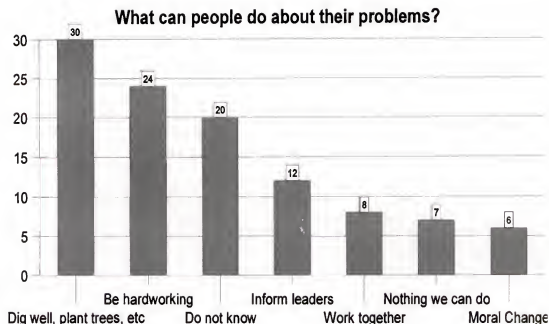


Figure 11-1: Responses to Local Problems

Initially, the answers to the question were thought to indicate the “empowerment” or “efficacy” of an individual. Someone who answered with an “I don’t know” or “there is nothing we can do” was obviously “unempowered” or lacked efficacy. Someone who answered, “we can work hard” similarly reflected a limited propensity to voice concerns. At first glance then the interesting finding pertained to how infrequently women answered that the concerns should be brought to higher political officials.

Over time, the arrogance beneath these assumptions became apparent. Specifically, respondents were being more realistic than my research design gave them credit. In this respect, the responses told me less about the subjective sense within the person, than about the objective possibilities they saw for changing the world that

surrounded them. From their perspective, there were very few options to improve their situation apart from planting trees or working hard. That churches do not contribute more generally or more dramatically to political efficacy then is not that surprising.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that the harsh realities of the social world are determinative in shaping levels of participation or voice among citizens. Nor am I arguing that subjective processes of empowerment are unimportant to the overall improvement of political life at the grassroots. To do so would undermine much of what I have written to this point. It is only to emphasize that local-level empowerment confronts serious obstacles.

As a result of this situation, the role of churches is multi-faceted. In understanding this we need to keep in mind an important point made by Daniel Levine. While religious institutions provide experiences and messages for people; people select and rework such experiences and messages “in accord with their own understanding of history and tradition, with a calculation of possibilities, and with an eye to what they see as urgent and immediate needs” (1986: 97; see also 1992 :19). In the context of rural Malawi the same logic obtains. For some citizens, churches help to overcome disempowerment, providing important skills and experiences which facilitate higher levels of participation and voice. As I stressed above, in many cases, the role of the churches in this regard is one of *actualizing* efficacious tendencies, rather than being their point of origin.

But for other citizens, churches play a different sort of role. Instead of increasing citizen senses of efficacy to shape the social world, the churches provide conceptual tools

for individuals to make sense of and obtain slight comfort from the desperation in the social environment.

Consider the situation of woman we shall call Susan. She has eight children and lacks sufficient maize to last her through the growing season. She attributes her food security problems to the fact that no fertilizer was available this year--either for free or at government subsidized rates. She had hoped that her uncle might provide some assistance, but the low price of tobacco at the auction floors curtailed his ability to help. In the larger picture, of course, her problems link to forces beyond her control and, indeed, outside of her cognitive frame of reference. The lack of fertilizer owes to the government's removal of subsidies under the structural adjustment program required by the IMF. Similarly, the drop in tobacco prices owes to global economic and political dynamics.

Regardless of the origin of her situation, for Susan, the fact is that she remains poor, with little hope of a way out. Neighbors are also poor, offering little assistance. Collective action has no precedent and seems to offer no immediate incentives. Does church participation provide her with a greater sense of efficacy? Not at all. But searching for higher efficacy with a woman like Susan belies the basic reality that confronts her. Frankly there are few obvious pathways out of her situation. Alternatively, her church experiences provide small grains of comfort in a knowledge of larger forces at work. In her own words, "these are the kinds of problems that exist on earth." "Only praying" can help solve them.

Others in the area offer similarly suggestive comments. One of Susan's neighbors was asked the same question by the research team. The response was quite candid, "all

people can do here is work until the day that God takes them away.” Like Susan, the role of religion is less to empower, than to mollify the difficult circumstances of existence. Yet another woman, a Catholic, claimed, “these problems are from Satan, he is working against God’s mercy who provides us with rain. I do not know how these problems can be solved.” Here, religious ideas provide the framework within which this woman makes sense of a reality which she simply cannot change.⁵

The basic point is that the hope for greater political efficacy or empowerment at the grassroots confronts a set of social circumstances which mitigate against their realization. In this situation, it might come a little surprise that when religious ideas and experiences become reworked by some church participants, they become reworked in such a way as to provide the some hope or psychological comfort in the idea that larger forces are at work. If life does not get better here, it may get better elsewhere. In this sense religion serves as the “heart of the heartless world,” or “opiate of the masses” as described by Marx. But importantly, for certain of the poor in the Mzimba area such analgesic uses of religious experiences are entirely rational.

Conclusion

In concluding on this fairly somber note, I do not wish to in any way discount the findings to this point. As we have seen, churches do play an important part in increasing the efficacy of both men and women in the Mzimba area. Moreover we have an idea of why they are able to play such a role. Such was one of the larger goals of the project. But at

⁵ Parallels can be drawn with E.P Thompson’s (1963) work.

the same time, it is important to keep in mind that while churches may play a role in shaping the social world, in other respects, they cannot overcome it.

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has focused empirically on two discrete case studies of local churches in politics. In so doing, the project has attempted to speak to larger theoretical concerns about the political role of churches and the issue of civil society more generally. In this final chapter, I draw attention to three related areas in which this study has made theoretical contributions. In the first place, in its theoretical findings, the study offers a prospective view of the role which these churches will likely play in Malawi's grassroots politics in the future. Second, the study has presented a useful analytical framework, offering insights to inform future research endeavors on similar issues. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the research speaks directly to the question of civil society. It raises questions about both the prospects for the emergence and activation of a "functional" civil society in contexts similar to Malawi, as well as the utility of the concept for the analysis of political life in Africa.

The Emerging Status of Local Churches in Malawi's Civil Society

The central issue which guided this inquiry concerned the status of local-level Presbyterian and Catholic churches as part of Malawian civil society. Specifically, to what extent do they contribute to the quality of democracy at grassroots? And what affects their contribution in this respect? Importantly, in answering the latter question, we

can offer some suggestions about the political role that local churches will likely play in the future. This, in turn, has significant implications for the emerging character of political life in Malawi.

In dealing with these questions I framed the inquiry first in terms of what the local clergy do as actors within civil society. Second, I examined the “socializing effect” of local church organizations on citizens at the grassroots. I take each of dimensions of the churches’ local-level roles in turn.

The findings suggest that, in a generalized sense, the clergy do not and will not play an active prophetic or empowering role as part of civil society. As we have seen, most clergy in our sample were relatively inactive in terms of their efforts to address local-level political concerns. To be sure, it is important to recognize that these findings are in some respects reflective of the political context in which the research was conducted. Indeed, had we examined clergy behavior during the highly charged period of transition, our perspective on the clergy’s political behavior might differ. As I indicated earlier, many clergy were part and parcel of efforts to challenge the Banda regime and push for multi-party reforms. This said, the point of the research is precisely to examine clergy activity in a situation where the tumult of national level changes has dissipated, but issues pertaining to the quality of democracy for citizens remain. In this sense, the conduct of the research during a relatively tranquil time in Malawi’s history served the larger aims of the project.

Moreover, in drawing attention to these findings, I do not mean to overstate their generalizability. As the reader will recall, our sample does not allow us to speak directly to the status of clergy as a whole across Malawi. However, the more important issue

concerns what our research suggests about the underlying causes of the clergy's relative inaction. These are conditions which apply to the clergy more generally. Moreover, these underlying causes are relatively immutable to change in the near future. It is attention to these deeper issues which offers the greatest prospective insight into the clergy's emerging political role.

As indicated, most local clergy do not have a conception of mission which directs them to take active and vocal political stances on issues confronting their communities. While there is talk within the churches of changing certain aspects of clerical formation to increase attention to social issues, at the time of writing these have to come to fruition. More importantly, socio-political conditions of Malawi are unlikely to give rise to theologies which inspire empowering and advocative roles on the part of the clergy. On one hand, partisan divisions in society direct clergy attention and discourses to the need for harmony in their communities, rather than justice. Discussions of the need for the clergy to empower the people or take prophetic stances on local issues are strangely out of place in a situation where partisan squabbles threaten unity of local religious communities.

On the other hand, other local theological constructions and appropriations reflect Malawi's dire social and economic circumstances. In conditions of grinding poverty, rampant AIDS, and broken promises from those in high political circles, "other-worldly" religious views find fertile terrain. These are conditions which many clergy encounter themselves. That they might emphasize salvation, rather than political solutions to temporal problems is entirely understandable, even if it serves to curtail their propensity to serve the functions of civil society at the grassroots.

Beyond this, as I have emphasized, much as the clergy are representatives of religious institutions, they are also socio-economic actors. And their interests and concerns in these respects can mitigate their propensity to address political issues in their communities. Some are tied to local patrons and thus are hesitant to undertake any actions which might disrupt such relations. This is especially true of Presbyterian ministers who rely on the local congregations for their own sustenance. Still others direct much of their attention and energies towards economic prospects--sometimes even using their church as a vehicle to pursue such goals. In turn, this places necessary limits on the amount of concern which the clergy can devote to issues outside of routine pastoral engagements. There is simply little time or room left in the day for efforts on behalf of local concerns. This further limits their propensity to rethink the basic contours of their calling and work in their communities.

In short, there are both theological and practical constraints on the clergy's propensity to embrace and work for local concerns in a manner befitting the "functionalist" vision of civil society. And these constraints are not likely to change the near future. This does not mean that there will be no effort by individual clergy to empower local actors or increase state responsiveness to community needs. Indeed, my research clearly suggests otherwise. It does imply, however that the hope that the clergy, as a general group within civil society, will lead the charge to create a more accountable and civic politics at the grassroots of Malawi is somewhat misguided.

When examining the socializing effect of the churches, there is a bit more cause for optimism. This pertains both to the role of churches generally, as well as to our more specific finding about the impact of local Catholic organizations on women. Importantly,

even more so than is the case with the above conclusions about the clergy, our ability to make generalizable statements about the local-level churches as a whole is very limited. Nonetheless, though based on a single community, the research does offer important insights about the nature of the churches' roles as socializing institutions. These insights allow us to make some suggestions about the conditions which will shape the impact of churches on the civic and political empowerment of grassroots citizens.

As to the general impact of churches, we have seen that local churches in Mzimba did contribute both to the civic activities of citizens and to emerging manifestations of political efficacy. Arguably the findings are not consistent across all of our indices. But nonetheless, they do indicate that local churches (as well as other local organizations) can help to form more active and efficacious citizens at the grassroots.

It is important to recall, however, that the outcome variables themselves reflect fairly small steps in processes of grassroots empowerment, not dramatic leaps forward. The churches contributed to citizen activities and voice in specified political and social spaces. This is important, but it should not be confused with citizen efforts to create new channels and vehicles for participation, or to radically alter the balance of power between the state and grassroots society. The tangible benefits which ensue from citizen participation and voice in the arenas I investigated in Mzimba are likely to emerge slowly, if at all. In this sense, in both Mzimba and similar contexts, churches will likely serve the important function of providing "civic resources" and skill-acquiring opportunities for citizens. But whether they will contribute to more radical processes of change at the grassroots remains an open question.

The more intriguing findings concern the impact of local Catholic organizations (the *mipakati*) on the emerging political efficacy of women. In this sense, we have clear evidence that one civil society organization is serving its "functions" to a greater extent than others--and doing so with a segment of the population which has historically played a marginal role in public life. This finding, in turn, opens possibilities for theoretical probing about the factors that allow one church to play this empowering role more dramatically than the other. In so doing, we can offer some comments about the factors affecting the long-term contributions of the churches to political efficacy.

As I have indicated, one reason that the Catholic church in Mzimba was promoting political efficacy to a greater extent than the Presbyterian churches pertained to the respective distribution of civic resources within the churches. The explanation, in this respect, focused on the internal working of these churches, bringing our attention to the fact that women in Catholic circles were more likely to obtain empowering experiences via their participation in religious arenas. These experiences included being in leadership positions, participating with men in local religious organizations, speaking in public fora, and witnessing models of female authority and voice.

In a second respect, however, the research suggested that the capacity of the local Catholic organizations to provide these kinds of experiences hinges considerably on their relations with their external environment. Relative to the Presbyterian churches, the Catholic church in Mzimba more effectively insulated local religious practices from social influences. As I have indicated, much of this pertained to the respective institutional designs of these churches. The Catholic situation of control from above means that there are greater possibilities to create alternative models of social interaction

within local religious organizations--models which are contrary to the predominant patterns of female submissiveness in rural Malawian society. By contrast, the Presbyterian situation of local control allows for the replication of local values and practices in church. Moreover, local control can in some cases diminish organizational efficacy. This can limit opportunities to acquire important skills in church.

Given these two insights, what can we say about the future contribution of these churches to the political efficacy of women? In the first place, to the extent that these, or any other, churches increase the opportunities for women to obtain civic skills and resources, they will play an important part in empowering women to take more active and vocal roles in the political process. This point is obvious enough. But in the second place, it needs to be recognized that the ability of churches to offer such empowering experiences hinges on their institutional characteristics. Churches which have the institutional capacity to curb the influence of local patriarchal values in grassroots organizations will be more able to provide such novel spaces and opportunities for women. Similarly, certain churches--owing to institutional design--will be more capable of ensuring the organizational efficacy of local religious organizations.

Because institutional designs are relatively immutable to change, the likelihood that the Presbyterian churches will offer greater civic opportunities for women is somewhat small. The Presbyterian institutional structure is tied to fundamental religious beliefs which prescribe a decentralization of ecclesiastical authority. Much the same can be said of other traditional congregational churches.¹ As such, even if church leaders

¹ One interesting issue for future research is whether newer Protestant churches might afford greater spaces for women. It is possible that newer churches are guided by religious beliefs which prescribe a greater role for women than in is the case in traditional

sought to create more opportunities for women, their ability to effect such changes within their institution would be limited. Real opportunities to improve the empowering functions of civil society appear to exist more in top-down religious institutions than those that devolve authority to the grassroots.

In sum, there are distinct rays of hope when considering the emerging socializing impact of the churches. However, these should not be overstated. As of yet, the churches do not appear to have contributed to dramatic changes in patterns of political thought and action at the grassroots. Moreover, somewhat ironically, the church which is more effectively empowering women is able to do so because it insulates their religious participation from the wider social environment. I address this issue more completely in the concluding section.

Understanding the Political Role of Local-level Churches

In coming to these conclusions, the study has relied on a broad analytical framework which guided the investigations of both the local clergy and socializing effects of local church organizations. In particular, I have argued that the political role of local churches is shaped by three larger factors--institutional, societal, and religious. In this sense, the project has situated the local church in its broader institutional and social setting, while not losing sight of the important religious variables which inhere within the organization. Admittedly, in its attention to these different issues, the project lacks some degree of parsimony. But in exploring a complex reality at the grassroots, adopting such

a broad framework proved not only necessary but also very useful. Future research on similar issues will do well to take note of the theoretical insights which the study offers.

One of the more notable aspects of the study is that the research highlights the important role played by all three of these factors. To be sure, because the framework examines two discrete aspects of the churches' role, it directed attention different issues pertinent to these three factors. Indeed, the very operationalization of these factors changes at the different levels of research. This is evident, for example, in my conceptualizations of the religious factors affecting the churches' impacts and activities at the grassroots. In the study of the clergy, such religious factors were understood as the mission definitions or perceptions of calling which inform clergy behavior. When dealing with the local church and its impact on citizens, I drew attention to their subjective religious experiences--and the potentially transformative impact which these experiences can have on citizen outlooks and activities in the social world.

Nonetheless, the more general insights about these factors should not be understated. Thus, although the conceptualization of the religious factor changes, the project was able to highlight that, in a broad sense, religion does have an important influence on the character and operation of churches as part of grassroots civil society. Religious values inform clerical activities in their communities. Moreover, the intensification of religious experiences through the *mipakati* was seen to encourage higher levels of church participation on the part of women. This, in turn, facilitated their acquisition of civic skills--one precondition to greater political activity and voice.

In this sense, moreover, the project challenges facile and reductionist understandings of religion and its role in the polity. Quite clearly, the project has

highlighted the potentially multi-directional impact of religion. The research has drawn attention to areas where religious factors enrich local-level political life; as well as areas where, for understandable reasons, they play a much less active and transformative role. Indeed, this bespeaks the highly complex nature of religion and its political role, a point clearly emphasized by other authors (see especially Ireland 1991 and Levine 1992). As I hope this project has illustrated, coming to grips with this complexity is an important step in understanding religion's role. This entails appreciation, on one hand, of the very individuated character of the religious variable--as witnessed in the highly personalized construction, reshaping, and appropriation of religious ideas by the actors in this study. On the other, it suggests the importance of understanding religious ideas within the context of the wider social environment in which they circulate.

The study also offers general insights with respect to the other factors to which I direct attention. Consider the importance of institutional structure on both the activities of the local clergy and the operation of local religious organizations. In both cases it was found that a decentralized ecclesiastical structure actually inhibits the ability of local churches to serve the functions of civil society as outlined in this study. As I have detailed, the reasons for this pertain largely to the fact that, at the grassroots, decentralized churches are more responsive to and reflective of local community power structures and values. In this respect, institutional structure mediated the influence of the third factor shaping the churches emerging political role. Here I refer to the larger social setting in which the churches are situated.

As I have argued, attention to the wider social environment is critical to understanding the political role of churches. Neither the behavior of the local clergy and

the character of local church organizations can be understood in isolation of the larger social influences upon them. This point, moreover, has implications not only for the study of local churches, but also for the issue of civil society more generally. Specifically, the indication that societal influences can actually undermine the propensity of these organizations to serve the functions of civil society raises an important question: How conducive is the social setting to the development and activation of a civil society which conforms to the functionalist vision? As this is one of the more important theoretical themes of the dissertation, it is on this note that I wish to conclude.

The Trouble with Civil Society

The liberal vision--put forward by both academics and policy makers--holds that civil society is one of the keys to democratic success in Africa. This hope lies in the assumption that certain actors which populate the non-state realm can perform critical functions necessary for democratic consolidation and deepening--checking state power, empowering citizens, and promoting democratic values in society. In many ways, my research serves to expose problems with this vision.

At the most basic level, we have seen that the civil society organizations under investigation in this study do not live up to the expectations of the functionalist vision. This minimally demonstrates that even the most ardent protagonists of liberalization at the level of the state may not contribute to more fundamental and far-reaching political changes at the grassroots. Indeed this issue has been recognized by others (see Bratton 1994b; Boadi 1996; Kasfir 1998b; Kassimir 1998).

More importantly, however, the research for this project helps to highlight an even greater defect in the liberal vision. Specifically, the functionalist view of civil society is rich in hope, yet quite sparse in terms of understanding the deeper social dynamics which shape the actors and organizations of civil society. It in many ways assumes that civil society organizations exist in a vacuum. As such, it overstates the possibilities for these actors and organizations to play civic and empowering roles in the polity.

The problem is that, rather than existing in vacuum, the actors and the organizations of civil society often reflect the social environment of which they are a part. To be sure, as Kasfir (1998a) notes, some writers have recognized this and thus conceptually excluded particularistic and uncivic organizations from their definition of civil society. But, social values and processes are also present in those organizations which fall under such conventional understandings of civil society, such as churches. And importantly, the presence of "society" in civil society organizations can in many cases undermine their propensity to serve democratizing functions. That is, while the functionalist vision of civil society prescribes a distinct role for the actors and organizations of civil society, their connections to social values and processes can actually bring them to play a wholly different role.

The point is clearly borne out by the research. For example, to understand the relative inactivity of some local clergy, we needed to understand their own embeddedness in processes of social class formation. They were consciously engaged in efforts to consolidate and enhance their position within Malawian society. As a result, they remained relatively unconcerned with expanding their pastoral efforts to address the

social and political concerns of the faithful. In these respects, their concerns as social and economic actors--not their status as part of civil society--were the key determinants of their behavior. Indeed, in some cases, rather than bringing them to play a prophetic or empowering role, being part of the organizations of civil society actually facilitated the efforts of these actors to pursue their social and economic concerns.

Still other clergy reflected connections to society in the religious frameworks which guided their engagements and interventions in their communities. The salience of certain religious ideas among the clergy can not be understood in isolation of social conditions they experience and political dynamics they witness. Thus while the liberal vision of civil society might hope for socio-political activism by the local clergy, the religious ideas which resonate and make sense in Malawi may in fact lead them in a different direction.

The issue is also evident in the research on the local churches in Mzimba. One of the primary reasons why the local Presbyterian churches did not play an empowering role among women was because of the influence of local values within those organizations. Patterns of social interaction and distributions of authority within the local Presbyterian churches tended to mirror those in society. Accordingly, women were left in subservient and relatively silent positions. Moreover, these churches were less effective in sheltering themselves from conflicts among members, leading in some cases to the replication of social conflicts within the organization. This had the effect of decreasing overall organizational efficacy.

Moreover, my research demonstrates that it is precisely in those instances where civil society organizations and actors are removed from local social values and processes

that they actually perform their functions. For instance, the most active clergy were the Catholic priests who had been to Europe or America for theological training. As many emphasized, this exposed them to alternative religious ideas--many of which prescribed a more active clerical role in addressing the social and political concerns of the faithful. Yet in holding these ideas, and acting on them, they were clearly outside of the norm among other clergy. Indeed, certain clergy who were educated overseas mentioned that it was difficult to "fit in" with their colleagues since their return.

In a similar vein, the local Catholic organizations are more effective in empowering women because they offer an alternative set of experiences and effectively insulate religious participation from local values and practices. In this sense, separation from society is a virtue.

There is an ironic twist in making this argument. One of the suppositions of the civil society literature is that the organizations of civil society are--or should be--representative of the larger society of which they are a part. In my research, however, the organizations which serve the functions of civil society are those which are the least representative of society as a whole. This in turn raises questions about the possibilities for civil society--both on the ground in Africa and as a useful analytic concept for academic inquiry.

My argument in this respect speaks to recent comments on civil society by Nelson Kasfir (1998a; 1998b). In his view, the predominant trend among both scholars and donors is to narrow conceptualizations of civil society to selectively include only those organizations which perform civic and democratizing functions. However, the organizations that perform such functions often have very few meaningful connections to

the social environment. One result is that attention to such organizations generates very little insight about the actual society of which they are a part. And in overlooking the social world beneath civil society organizations, scholars and donors overstate the civic or democratizing tendencies within African polities.

One corrective to this problem is to use research on varied social organizations as an optic to gain wider and deeper understanding of the social forces and processes at work in African countries. As I hope I have demonstrated, my research carries significance not only for what it tells us about the status of churches within civil society, but also for the insights into the social roots of these organizations. It is these social roots, unfortunately, that undermine the capacity of certain local churches--both clergy and grassroots organizations--to serve the functions of civil society.

In highlighting that the presence of "society" within these organizations can undermine their democratizing functions, I do not wish to take a condemnatory role towards Malawian society. It is only to emphasize that if we as scholars are going to embrace the potential of civil society, we need to confront the social environment of which they are a part. This entails a greater sensitivity to the potentially uncivic and undemocratic features of society, as well as to the deeper social conditions which give rise to those features. Mercantile behavior on the part of the clergy may reflect moral dissonance on their part. But even more so it reflects the problematic economic opportunity structures in Malawian society, as well as the expectations on the clergy by their larger primordial community which depends on them. The "other-worldly" emphases of certain clergy and church-goers may seem irrational and fatalistic. But they also bespeak the impossibilities which confront the average citizen in Malawi--especially

within the context of the AIDS epidemic and the current push for economic liberalization. And the lack of cooperation within local churches owes its origins not to the cultural deficiencies of Malawians, but to brutal historical and economic circumstances which continue to undermine the development of social capital at the grassroots.

By focusing our attention in this direction, we may obtain some perspective on the contradictory and problematic tendencies which lurk beneath the surface of Africa's new democracies. This is important, in one respect, for what it can suggest about the long term prospects for the deepening of democracy in African societies. Moreover, it might also unearth more realistic avenues for intervention by those who wish to improve those prospects.

APPENDIX A
INDICES FOR SPECIFIC SUB-GROUPS:
CLUB LEADERSHIP AS AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Table A-1: Associational Indices for Catholics

Catholics (n=32)	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Education	.38	.01
Wealth	.23	.05
Worship Frequency	.30	.01
Church Authority	.37	.01
Church Participation	.35	.01

Table A-2: Impact of Church Authority on Club Leadership -
Less and Moderately Educated Catholics

Leadership Rank	No Church Authority	With Church Authority	Row Total
Member	10	3	13
Secondary Leader	2	5	7
Primary Leader	0	3	3
Total	12	11	23

Table A-3: Associational Indices for Persons from Other Denominations

Other Denominations (n=49)	Measure	Sig.
Education	.23	.05
Wealth	-.10	.38
Worship Frequency	.15	.12
Church Authority	.28	.04
Church Participation	.25	.02

Table A-4: Impact of Church Authority on Club Leadership -
Less and Moderately Educated Members of Other Denominations

Leadership Rank	No Church Authority	With Church Authority	Row Total
Member	18	5	23
Secondary Leader	3	7	10
Primary Leader	2	2	4
Total	23	14	37

Table A-5: Associational Indices for Presbyterians

Presbyterians (n=24)	Measure	Sig.
Education	.18	.32
Wealth	.20	.24
Worship Frequency	.05	.75
Church Authority	-.05	.76
Church Participation	-.04	.80

Table A-6: Impact of Church Authority on Club Leadership -
Less and Moderately Educated Presbyterians

Leadership Rank	No Church Authority	With Church Authority	Row Total
Member	6	1	7
Secondary Leader	5	1	6
Primary Leader	1	0	1
Total	12	2	14

Table A-7: Associational Indices for Catholic Women

Catholic Women (n=19)	Measure	Sig.
Education	.25	.22
Wealth	.05	.68
Worship Frequency	.27	.104
Church Authority	.28	.19
Church Participation	.29	.07

Table A-8: Associational Indices for Women from Other Denominations

Women from Other Denominations (n=33)	Measure	Sig.
Education	.30	.01
Wealth	-.23	.03
Worship Frequency	.09	.148
Church Authority	.20	.15
Church Participation	.17	.16

Table A-9: Associational Indices for Presbyterian Women

Presbyterian Women (n=17)	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Education	.13	.56
Wealth	-.04	.79
Worship Frequency	.07	.73
Church Authority	-.05	.69
Church Participation	.07	.72

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN MZIMBA

Name:
Date:
Village:
Sex:
Religion:
Surveyor:

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Where were you born?
2. What tribe are you?
3. How old are you? (If unknown make educated guess)
4. What class did you finish at school?
5. In addition to farming, what work do you do?
6. How many fields do you have?
7. What size are your fields?
8. What kind of crops do you grow?
9. (If applicable) This year how many bales of tobacco did you harvest?
10. This year how many bags of maize did you harvest?
11. Do you sell your crops?
12. How many children do you have?
13. Are you married?

RELIGION

1. Where do you worship?
2. Have you always worshiped in this church?
(If no)
 - 2a. Where did you worship before?
 - 2b. Why did you leave that first church?
3. How often do you go to church each month?
4. Do you have any positions of authority at church?
(If yes)
 - 4a. Which?
 - 4b. When were you chosen?
5. Have you had other positions of authority?
(If yes)
 - 5a. Which
 - 5b. When chosen?
6. Are you a member of any organizations at church, such as the women's guild, the Legion of Mary, or choirs?
(If yes)
 - 6a. Which?
7. In addition to Sunday, do you go to church at other times? (Why?)
8. Did you have your marriage blessed at church?
9. Are all of your children baptized?
10. (If Catholic) How often do you go to your small christian community?

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

1. Are you in any clubs here in this area?
(If yes)
 - 1a. Which?

2. When did you join?

3. Do you have any position of authority in your club?

(If yes)

3a. Which?

3b. When were you chosen?

4. Is your husband/wife in a club?

(If yes)

4a. Which?

5. Do you have any position of authority here in the village?

(If yes)

5a. Which?

5b. When were you chosen?

6. What problems do you find in farming?

7. Have you ever advised the agricultural advisor about this problem?

(If yes did they go there or speak out at a meeting?)

7a. About which problem?

8. Have you ever advised the district agricultural officer about this problem?

(If yes, did they go there or speak out at a meeting?)

8a. About which problem?

9. Have you ever spoken about these problems with other people in the small christian community, at the choir, or at any other church related meeting?

(If yes)

9a. About which problems?

9b. Did the people help you?

10. What problems do you encounter here in this area?

11. Have you ever spoken about these problems with other people in the small christian community, at the choir, or at any other church related meeting?

(If yes)

11a. About which problems?

11b. Did the people help you?

12. Have you ever spoken about any problems with other people in the small christian community, at the choir, or at any other church related meeting?

(If yes)

12a. About which problems?

12b. Did the people help you?

13. Have you ever worked together with people at your Church to solve any local problem?

(If yes)

13a. Which problem?

14. Have you ever worked together with people here in the village to solve a problem which is found here?

14a. Which problem?

15. Have you ever spoken to the priest or minister about any of your problems or the problems here in the village?

(If yes)

15a. Which problem?

15b. Did he help you?

15. Have you ever spoken to the chief about any of your problems or the problems here in the village?

(If yes, did they go to him or did they speak out at a meeting?)

15a. Which problem?

16. (Emphasize since Malawi's political changes) What about the leaders of the party?

(If yes, did they go to him or speak out at a meeting?)

16a. Which problem?

17. What about those responsible for development?

(If yes, did they go to him or speak out at a meeting?)

17a. Which problem?

18. What about the local ward counselor?

(If yes, did they go to him or speak out at a meeting?)

18a. Which problem?

19. What about the MP?

(If yes, did they go to him or speak out at a meeting?)

19a. Which problem?

20. Have you ever written a letter to the MP or the local party leaders about your problems or the problems found here in the village?

(If yes)

20a. Which problem?

21. Have you ever done anything else to inform leaders (such as the MP, party officials, or the DC) about your concerns?

For example, Have you signed a letter or spoken up at a meeting?

22. Are you in any party?

23a. (If yes) Do you have a position in authority in the party?

23b. (If no) Do you go to party meetings? How often?

POLITICAL ATTITUDES

1) You told us about certain problems here in the village, such as xyz. Why did these problems come?

2) How can these problems be solved? (If they say I dont know, please list it)

3. (If necessary) How should these problems be solved?

4. Do you believe that youth should have positions of authority in clubs, organizations, or in politics?

5. Do you believe that youth should be leaders in clubs, organizations, or in politics?

6. Do you believe that women should have positions of authority in clubs, organizations, or in politics?

7. Do you believe that women should be leaders in clubs, organizations, or in politics?

8. Are you happy with the recent political changes in Malawi? Why?

9. What problems have emerged since the political changes occurred?

10. Are there any problems with political leaders? (If no) Are you happy with the political leaders?

10a. What about the MP?

(If they reference problems)

10b. Have you ever spoken to people about these problems?

11. What kind of people should political leaders be?

12. What should political leaders do for their people

APPENDIX C
SELECTED ASSOCIATIONAL MEASURES FOR MEN:
POLITICAL EFFICACY INDICATORS

Table C-1: Associational Indices for Political Efficacy Indicators

<u>Party Activity Rank</u>	<u>Tau</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Age	.05	(.67)
Ethnicity	1.2 ^b	(.74)
 <u>Voice Score</u>		
Age	.05	(.98)
Wealth	.14	(.24)
Ethnicity	2.3 ^b	(.51)
 <u>Voicing Criticism</u>		
Age	-1.0	(.46)
Wealth	.01	(.98)
Education	.00	(.98)
Club Rank	.09	(.51)
Club Time	.07	(.46)
Church Authority	.11	(.36)
Ethnicity	2.4 ^b	(.48)

^b = Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis)

APPENDIX D
SELECTED ASSOCIATIONAL MEASURES FOR WOMEN:
POLITICAL EFFICACY INDICATORS

Table D-1: Associational Indices for Party Activity and Voice Score

<u>Party Activity Rank</u>	<u>Tau</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Age	-.02	(.82)
Wealth	.02	(.76)
Education	.09	(.19)
Club Rank	.02	(.82)
Club Time	.03	(.62)
Ethnicity	.86 ^b	(.83)
Marital Status	1.4 ^b	(.69)
 <u>Voice Score</u>		
Age	-.05	(.55)
Wealth	.04	(.60)
Education	.08	(.38)
Party	.08	(.26)
Worship Frequency	.04	(.43)
Ethnicity	2.4 ^b	(.49)
Marital Status	3.8 ^b	(.28)

Table D-2: Associational Indices for Voicing Criticism

Voicing Criticism

Age	-.11	(.36)
Wealth	.15	(.16)
Education	.10	(.33)
Club Rank	.15	(.15)
Club Time	.15	(.15)
Party	.13	(.14)
Church Authority	.09	(.36)
Ethnicity	.34 ^b	(.98)
Marital Status	.76 ^b	(.85)

^b = Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis)

APPENDIX E
SELECTED ASSOCIATIONAL MEASURES FOR CATHOLIC WOMEN:
POLITICAL EFFICACY INDICATORS

Table E-1: Associational Indices for Party Activity and Voice Score

<u>Party Activity Rank</u>	<u>Tau</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Age	.05	(.76)
Wealth	.04	(.72)
Education	.19	(.04)
Club Rank	.07	(.65)
Club Time	.08	(.47)
Ethnicity	7.4 ^b	(.02)
Marital Status	2.6 ^b	(.45)
 <u>Voice Score</u>		
Age	-.15	(.16)
Wealth	.04	(.67)
Education	.09	(.50)
Club Rank	.07	(.58)
Club Time	.03	(.75)
Party	.09	(.42)
Ethnicity	.57 ^b	(.75)
Marital Status	3.3 ^b	(.35)

Table E-2: Associational Indices for Voicing Criticism

<u>Voicing Criticism</u>	<u>Tau</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Age	-.19	(.35)
Wealth	.28	(.12)
Education	.05	(.78)
Club Rank	.07	(.68)
Club Time	.11	(.53)
Party	.21	(.14)
Church Authority	.12	(.51)
Worship Frequency	.06	(.65)
Ethnicity	.64	(.72)
Marital Status	1.05	(.79)

^b = Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis)

APPENDIX F
SELECTED ASSOCIATIONAL MEASURES FOR PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN:
POLITICAL EFFICACY INDICATORS

Table F-1: Associational Indices for Party Activity and Voice Score

<u>Party Activity Rank</u>	<u>Tau</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Age	-.04	(.75)
Wealth	.08	(.33)
Education	.11	(.31)
Club Rank	-.01	(.97)
Club Time	.01	(.94)
Ethnicity	4.0 ^b	(.13)
Marital Status	1.2 ^b	(.75)
 <u>Voice Score</u>		
Age	.05	(.74)
Wealth	.01	(.93)
Education	.04	(.77)
Club Rank	.04	(.71)
Club Time	.03	(.75)
Party	.08	(.47)
Ethnicity	.37 ^b	(.82)
Marital Status	8.8 ^b	(.03)

Table F-2: Associational Indices for Voicing Criticism

<u>Voicing Criticism</u>	<u>Tau</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Age	.09	(.58)
Wealth	-.02	(.88)
Education	.05	(.78)
Club Rank	.01	(.93)
Club Time	-.02	(.85)
Party	.11	(.36)
Church Authority	.09	(.48)
Ethnicity	4.6 ^b	(.10)
Marital Status	7.2 ^b	(.07)

^b = Chi-square (Kruskal-Wallis)

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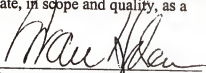
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Peter VonDoepp received his B.A. in Political Science from the University of New Hampshire in 1989 and his M.A. in Political Science from the University of Florida in 1994. At the University of Florida, he has held a CLAS Dissertation Fellowship and Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships. His research in Malawi was funded by grants from the Overseas Ministries Study Center and the National Science Foundation. In addition to his field work in Malawi, he has worked in other capacities in Africa. In 1990, he served as a development volunteer in Zimbabwe. In 1992, he worked as a State Department intern at the US Embassy in Zambia.

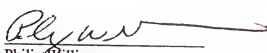
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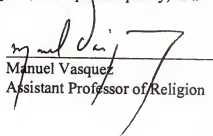
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